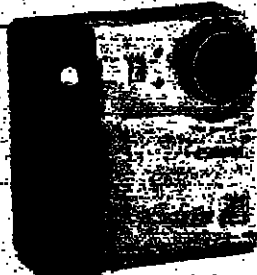


WIN A CANON DIGITAL CAMERA INTERFACE



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£350,000 profit goes to charity

Simon to sell £2.3 million BP shares

By Andrew Pierce
POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

LORD SIMON of Highbury bowed to political pressure yesterday and announced that he was selling his £2.3 million BP shareholding and giving to charity the £350,000 profit it had accrued since he became a minister.

Lord Simon said that publication earlier that day of the oil company's second-quarter results meant he would no longer be breaking insider-trading laws if he sold the 270,000 shares.

The move by the minister, who gave up a £240,000 salary as chairman of BP to work unpaid for the Government, was part of a damage-limitation exercise by Labour ahead of Friday's elections to mark Tony Blair's first 100 days in office. The Tories accused the Government of a "breath-taking U-turn".

Only 24 hours earlier the Government had maintained that because of insider dealing rules Lord Simon, Minister for Trade and Competitiveness in Europe, would not review his shareholding until the New Year.

The shares rose 39.5p yesterday on the back of second-quarter figures, showing higher-than-expected profits, which added a further £105,000 to the value of Lord Simon's holding. The shares have soared 18 per cent since May 7 when his appointment was announced.

The £400,000 shares held for Lord Simon by BP in a Jersey offshore trust, which company rules dictated could not be released until May



Simon, minister before he joined Labour party

1998, will also be sold after he secured special dispensation from the directors.

As the Tories claimed vindication for their campaign, Lord Simon became embroiled in further controversy. It emerged yesterday that he joined the Labour party only after he was appointed to the Government. Lord Simon, a close neighbour of Mr Blair in Islington prior to the election, had not joined the 1,500-strong Islington South and Finsbury branch.

During his first press conference on the controversy, which has dogged the Government for the past month, Lord Simon said he had decided to sell the shares after the BP board confirmed that he was no longer in possession of any insider information in relation to the company.

Lord Simon, who was flanked by Peter Mandelson, the Minister without Portfolio responsible for policy preservation, said: "I have acted in accordance with the letter and

spirit of the rules throughout this affair. I have acted with complete propriety. At no stage has anyone alleged that I have even had the opportunity to take decisions in my capacity as a minister which could in any way affect my shares."

He added: "I deeply regret the innuendos put forward by the Opposition in this affair and hope they do not discourage other business people seeking a position in public life."

Asked whether he now regretted leaving the commercial world, in which he was regarded as one of Britain's leading businessmen, he replied: "I have no regrets. It's an interesting learning curve."

Lord Simon denied that he had been forced to back down because of pressure from the Tories over a potential conflict of interest. He also rejected the suggestion that he had been ordered by the Prime Minister to sell the shares, and surrender the £350,000 profit to charity.

"This is a totally personal decision," he said. "As far as I'm concerned I certainly haven't spoken to him [Tony Blair]." He added that he had never considered resignation because there had never been a conflict of interest.

Lord Simon declined to reveal which charities would benefit.

While he was speaking, Lord Simon's car was given a £35 parking ticket while it was illegally parked in Millbank.

Continued on page 2, col 6



Dr George Carey in Sydney: "merely restating" Church's well known position

Remarriage by Prince 'would cause crisis' says Carey

By Ruth Gledhill and Alan Hamilton

THE Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, said yesterday that the Prince of Wales would plunge the Church of England into crisis if he remarried.

Dr Carey's comments, at a news conference in Australia to mark the 150th anniversary of the Anglican Church in Australia, took English bishops by surprise and prompted warnings that the Church could face disestablishment over the issue.

The Archbishop's comments come as the Prince has been taking steps publicly to acknowledge his relationship with Camilla Parker Bowles, including hosting a fiftieth birthday party for her at Highgrove last month. Dr Carey said that the Prince had no wish to remarry and the fact that he is divorced is not an issue. But Dr Carey said: "It is true that remarriage would create a crisis for the Church."

The Prince of Wales would become Supreme Governor of the Church of England on succession to the throne and, at present, the Church's laws prohibit the marriage of a divorced person in church where the former spouse is still living.

The Ven George Austin, Archdeacon of York, said: "The Archbishop is right: it would cause a crisis in the Church if the Prince of Wales remarried." He said the Archbishop should speak out about the Prince's relationship with Mrs Parker Bowles, which he has never done.

"The Church cannot go along with remarriage, but neither can it go along with a mistress," he added. "What the Church seems to be doing publicly is pretending Mrs Parker Bowles does not exist." He said that if the Prince remarried, it would create

pressure for disestablishment. "I am in favour of disestablishment, but I hope it does not come for that reason."

The Bishop of Oxford, the Right Rev Richard Harries, said: "The Archbishop was not referring to any new crisis; he was simply referring to the Church's marriage discipline, where under normal circumstances people are not able to get married in church for a second time if a former partner is still living. It certainly would not be a constitutional

The Prince of Wales has the overwhelming backing of the country's "top people" who believe he should be able to marry whoever he likes. A poll of 100 prominent people said it should make no difference if a king was married to a divorcee. Page 2

crisis and would not lead to disestablishment.

Lord Blake, the Conservative peer and constitutional historian, predicted that if the Prince did marry Mrs Parker Bowles, the Church would not be able to "block his path to the throne." "I do not believe it would create a major difficulty. I think public opinion would accept it and that is what matters," he said.

He added that he found it surprising that the Archbishop had chosen to make his comments in Australia rather than in England.

Church sources said that the Archbishop had simply been repeating the well known stance of the Church on the question of divorcees remarrying in church.

However, one senior source said: "This intervention is rather untimely. Many people

Continued on page 2, col 3

Outside smokers to be banned

A decree to be signed by President Clinton will ban smokers from lighting up at the entrances to federal buildings, a practice that has grown with the increase of no-smoking offices. In London, companies are trying to stop smoking near offices. Page 3

£13m customer

A single Coutts customer in America cost NatWest £13 million. The bank decided to comment further on the private bank's loss but it was not believed to be the Duchess of York. Page 23

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Thousands hit by university logjam

By David Charter, Education Correspondent

MORE than 50,000 qualified applicants are forecast to be denied a university place this summer, as thousands of late entrants join the scramble for the last free higher education places.

Many of the 26,000 people who planned to take a gap year after A-levels are expected to seek a university place in October to avoid losing up to £5,000 under government plans to charge students' tuition fees and scrap grants.

University admissions tutors are also braced for a late rush of applications from people who left school over the last decade with strong A-level grades. They will threaten to squeeze out this summer's A-level students who missed the target grades for their first-choice university, but would usually find an alternative in the clearing process.

University admissions officers are predicting this year's clearing process — which matches students with unfilled university places — will be the most hectic ever.

Diana Milner-Walker, admissions officer at Kingston University, said: "I am already getting calls from students who deferred their places until 1998 wanting to come this year instead. People are panicking." Department for Education officials are said to be "in panic mode" in spite of assurances from David Blunkett, the Education Secretary, that clearing will not be any more hectic than in previous years.

The Government announced last month that means-tested fees of £1,000 each year would be charged from 1998, and the maintenance grant phased out.

Schools are also bracing themselves. Richard Russell, director of studies at Sevenoaks School, Kent, said: "I am dreading what it is going to be like because there is not going to be much flexibility. Pressure for places in 1997 is clearly going to be stiffer than ever."

About half of the 32,000 A-level students who had the required grades but chose not to go on to higher education last year are believed to be in the hunt for places this summer, as well as thousands from previous years.

The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) is running a series of urgent investigations to gauge the potential impact on clearing. Around 295,000 places are available and are being chased by 350,000 candidates. Tony Higgins, its chief executive, warned students not to rush into unsuitable courses for the sake of avoiding fees. "Clearing always seems fraught, but it works."



"No-one knows if he is at university or if he's taking a year off"

Cricket catches idea from baseball

By Simon Wilde

ENGLISH cricket will embrace ideas from football and American sport in an attempt to revitalise flagging standards and a lack of success at international level. A revolutionary overhaul of the game is approved next month.

The plans were put before the first-class county clubs at Lord's yesterday. Under them the county championship, which has remained largely unchanged since it was first formally organised 107 years ago, would be divided next year into three "conferences" of six teams, with end-of-season play-offs as happens in baseball.

In the following year there would be an FA Cup-style knockout one-day competition involving 60 teams — counties and national sides from, for example, Scotland, Ireland, Denmark and Holland.

There would also be a one-day National League, with promotion and relegation between two divisions and scope to play matches under floodlights if desired — on any day of the week, as does the Premiership.

The proposals were unveiled by Lord Macaulay of Knebworth, the chairman of the England and Wales Cricket Board, and met with a generally favourable response from the county executives, who will vote on them in six weeks' time.

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Details, pages 40, 44

Plane carrying 257 crashes in jungle

By Bronwen Maddox and Giles Whittell

A KOREAN AIR Boeing 747 jet with 257 people on board crashed and burst into flames in jungle five miles from the airport in Guam last night. Unconfirmed reports said there were 29 survivors.

The plane had reported engine difficulties shortly before the crash which happened in rainy weather. Andrew Murphy of the Guam Airport Authority said: "There was an extensive fire after the aircraft hit the ground."

Flight 801 from Seoul, South Korea, to Guam had been cleared to land when contact was lost. The aircraft — a Boeing 747-300, delivered in 1984 — was three miles from Agaña International Airport, said Tom Rea, the US Federal Aviation Administration's Pacific representative in Honolulu. It was early Wednesday, Guam time.

Frank Matane of Guam Police said that 29 people apparently survived. He said the plane went down "in rough terrain, up in the hills". Wreckage had been spotted strewn in the rugged jungle area.

There were immediate questions about whether the rain contributed to the crash.

A large US Navy helicopter was ferrying survivors from

the crash site and a second helicopter was joining the rescue, said Lieutenant Thomas Robinson of the US Coast Guard.

Dr Michael Cruz of Guam Memorial Hospital said teams were standing by to receive any survivors. Despite the presence of the hilly terrain on which flight 801 went down, Agaña airport, on Guam's central west coast, is not considered difficult for landing even large jets, an airport spokesman said yesterday.

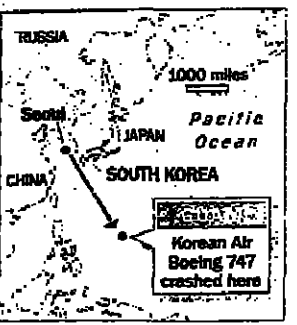
Korean Airlines (the original name of the airline) suffered one of the world's worst airline incidents in September 1983 when the Soviet Union shot down one of its 747 jets with 269 people aboard.

Guam, an American Pacific protectorate 3,700 miles southwest of Hawaii, and its airports have been a vital part of the American military presence in the western Pacific since before the Second World War and are now a popular destination among for tourists from the Far East.

With the end of the Cold War, tourism has emerged as the island's main industry, with increasing air traffic to it from Japan, Taiwan and South Korea.

There are at least two landings a day by 747 jets from Seoul Agaña airport, an airport spokesman said yesterday.

With volcanoes on Guam's southern half but a level plateau to the north, this westernmost American possession was used as a springboard for the Allied counter-offensive against the Japanese in 1944 and for B-52 bombing raids on Vietnam.



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An all-female litter of ten dalmatian puppies born in Ipswich. Half the litter have liver-coloured spots and the other half black dots. Their owners, Barbara and Terry Powell, believe that the number of bitches may be a record

Princess to meet landmine victims in Bosnia

By Emma Wilkins

DIANA, Princess of Wales, will meet landmine victims in the town of Travnik during her forthcoming visit to Bosnia, the American charity organising the trip said yesterday.

The Princess, who is expected to travel to Sarajevo in a privately chartered plane tomorrow, will also visit Zenica. The trip is being organised by the Landmine Survivors Network, which helps amputees all over the world. It was founded two years ago by Ken Rutherford and Jerry White, both landmine victims.

"We have linked up with a local group of disabled people who we want the Princess to meet," said a spokesman for the charity. "There is no question of the Princess being in any danger." He said that the charity was delighted to have won her support.

Security for the Princess will be intense. Officials at the Foreign Office who were consulted about her plans, were adamant that she should not be taken to Banja Luka or Doboj which are in Serb territory. There is a risk of hostility to Britain after the SAS were involved in killing an alleged Serb war criminal who opened fire on them as they arrived to arrest him in Prijedor. Another alleged war criminal was held.

The visit also comes at a sensitive time in relations between Britain and Bosnia's three-man presidency based in Sarajevo. This week Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, cut off all contact with Mugdim Pasic, the Bosnian chargé d'affaires in London.

The Foreign Office said that the Princess's security was paramount. Last night a spokesman said: "Although this is a private visit, we welcome the Princess of Wales's involvement in the landmines issue. She has helped to highlight the suffering caused by anti-personnel landmines, and given impetus to international efforts to achieve an effective worldwide ban, to which the UK is fully committed."

"We are happy for the Princess to visit Bosnia-Herzegovina, subject to security considerations. We have undertaken a security assessment. Our advice at this stage is for the Princess of Wales's office to go ahead. But we are keeping the security situation under close review."

'Top people' say Charles should be free to wed

By Valerie Elliott
Whitehall Editor

THE Prince of Wales has the overwhelming backing of the country's "opinion formers", who believe he should be able to marry whoever he likes. They also believe it should make no difference if he were married to a divorcee and became king, and that he should still become Supreme Governor of the Church of England.

A survey for *The Times* from Opinion Leader Research, which polled a panel of 100 influential figures — including two Cabinet Ministers, MPs, peers, permanent secretaries, leading personalities in business and the City, newspaper editors and directors of various think-tanks — was extremely supportive of the Prince and his relationship with Camilla Parker Bowles.

The remarks of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, in Australia yesterday appeared to have little impact on the views of leading opinion formers. Dr Carey warned the Prince he would plunge the Church of England into crisis if he sought to wed Mrs Parker

Church 'crisis' over Prince

Continued from page 1
have views on the Prince of Wales and the future of the monarchy, but now is not the right time to start debating this issue.

According to Lord St John of Fawley, the constitutional expert, it is "premature" to raise the issue. He said that public acceptance that the Prince of Wales might marry one day is growing, and the Church's stance on the issue need not be immutable. He

added: "It would raise no constitutional issue if the Prince decided to remarry because his succession to the throne derives from the Act of Settlement and not from his marital status."

Dr Carey's comments, although delivered in an unguarded moment during a news conference, are the strongest he has made on the subject and certainly represent his true views on the subject.

Bowles. More than eight out of 10 — 82 per cent — of those questioned said he should not give up his right to the throne if he were to remarry and 85 per cent said he should remarry whoever he liked.

Only 25 per cent disagreed with the proposition that a future British monarch could marry a divorcee and remain Supreme Governor of the Church of England.

Half believed he could marry a divorcee, become king, and remain Supreme Governor of the Church of England, while 25 per cent have no view at all on the matter. This was the highest number of abstentions on any of the questions on the Prince and showed they really had no special concern about the issue.

Those questioned were unclear about the future status of any future wife. There has been some talk that if the Prince were to remarry he should have a morganatic arrangement where his new wife would not assume the title Queen and would live outside the public eye. This

compromise has been denounced by constitutional experts as having no place in British law.

Yet in the survey, while 99 per cent said they did not think a future wife should automatically become Queen, 63 per cent said they would like a new wife to have an official public role.

The Prince's friends were "delighted" with the findings last night although the Prince has made no indication of any intention of marrying Mrs Parker Bowles. Senior members of the Privy Council are also now convinced that there is no real objection to the Prince remarrying Mrs Parker Bowles if he wishes.

The reticence at the time of the separation and divorce — with the John Major insisting that the Prince should make clear he had no intention of remarrying — was understood to have been to protect the Princess, Prince William and Prince Harry.

It was feared that a decision by the Prince to remarry in haste might have provoked a dramatic reaction from the Princess. One senior Whitehall source said last week: "That view has now passed."

Labour activists say no to Paisley outsider

By Gillian Bowditch
Scotland Correspondent

LABOUR activists in Paisley South have voiced fears that the party leadership will impose an outside candidate to fight the by-election made necessary by the suicide of Gordon McMaster.

Despite having a long history of in-fighting, the safe Labour seat is seen as prize catch and will attract a list of strong applicants. But activists are concerned that they will be forced to accept someone with no local connection. Labour's by-election defeat in Uxbridge last week was blamed on the decision to replace the general election candidate, David Williams, a local man, with Andrew Slaughter.

Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, is known to favour his former aide, Douglas Alexander, a 29-year-old solicitor who has twice fought Perth and Kinross for Labour.

One local party member said: "Douglas fought a good fight in Perth but he is a boy being sent in to do a man's job. He will be eaten alive in Paisley South. There are fears that Gordon Brown will use his influence to promote him."

A spokesman for the Scottish Labour Party said that the selection procedure would be the one used in every by-election. "Candidates will apply and the National Executive Committee's by-election committee will draw up a shortlist to put to the local constituency party, which will make the final decision."

But the Paisley South activist said: "It all depends whether it is Douglas Alexander and two no-hopers or Douglas Alexander and two strong contenders."

Mr Alexander's main rival for the seat is likely to be Pat McCadden, Tony Blair's special adviser on constitutional affairs. Senior Labour sources said that if he applied he would probably win the selection contest.

Other contenders are Jack McConnell, general secretary of the Scottish Labour Party, Mr Alexander's sister Wendy, a special adviser to the Scottish Secretary, and Hugh Henry, leader of Renfrewshire Council.

Hume may agree to stand for president

The race for Ireland's presidency may be over before it has started. Dublin's two biggest political parties have approached John Hume about standing, and the most popular politician on the island is leaning towards accepting. If Mr Hume, leader of Northern Ireland's nationalist Social Democratic and Labour party, does allow his name to go forward neither Fianna Fail nor Fine Gael would put up candidates against him, meaning the 60-year-old Catholic from Londonderry would almost certainly be elected unopposed. That would make him the Irish Republic's first northern president.

"I would be a super salesman for Ireland, trying to bring investment and jobs here," Mr Hume was quoted as saying in the same *New York Times* interview in which he said he was leaning towards accepting. Mr Hume's problem is that the presidency would prevent him playing a direct role in the full-scale peace negotiations beginning in Belfast on September 15 that he has done more than anyone to promote. However nationalists in Belfast yesterday did not regard that obstacle as insuperable. Mrs Robinson is resigning the presidency on September 12.

Cook praises 'noble' wife

Robin Cook issued a statement last night saying that he had behaved badly towards his wife, Margaret, whom he has left for his Commons secretary, Gaynor Regan. The Foreign Secretary said that Mrs Cook had behaved nobly, in contrast to his actions. On Monday Mrs Cook, a consultant haematologist, said in a statement: "Whatever my husband's private life may have been, he has always been a very good Member of Parliament and is a very good Foreign Secretary." Mr Cook is understood to have wanted to draw a "civilised line" under the events of the previous two days by responding in kind to what he saw as a generous statement from his wife.

Letters, page 17

Appeal to train drivers

South West Trains is offering its drivers £250 a day to cancel their summer holidays and solve staff shortages that threaten cancellations on commuter services into Waterloo station, London. The company is anxious to avoid a repeat of its winter problems, when 2,000 trains were cancelled between February and April after too many drivers were made redundant. The 680 drivers could earn up to £4,000 if they work a marathon six-week session, taking only three days off — the equivalent of a 16 per cent pay rise. The company said the problem was a legacy from holidays booked under the British Rail rota system, which was scrapped in February.

Bank recruits 'children'

The banking union Bifa has condemned Midland Bank for recruiting the teenage children of staff to overcome a shortage of part-time workers in holiday periods. An internal Midland memo, a copy of which has been seen by *The Times*, calls on branch managers in the Newcastle area to "suggest that you consider recruiting the teenage children (age 16+) of your staff, who are still in education". The memo says that the teenagers could be paid £5.44 an hour and be trained as cashiers. A Midland spokesman said: "This has been going on for years and has proved to be very popular, with some young people moving on to join the bank full-time."

Mothers' Union barred

A vicar has closed his parish's branch of the Mothers' Union because the organisation's national magazine *Home & Family* published an article by the mother of a homosexual and refused his request for an article expressing "traditional" views. Elderly members at St Simon's, Southsea, wept when they were told the news. In the past the Rev Ted Pratt has also spoken against Church moves to welcome homosexuals, and attacked soap operas for lowering moral standards. Margaret Symonds, president of the Portsmouth diocesan Mothers' Union, said: "We have the feeling that there has been a lack of compassion here."

Peter Collingridge

A report, "Fireman's pole death" (yesterday), stated that Peter Collingridge, 70, was found dying after apparently trying to slide down a pole at Chester fire station. In fact, the circumstances of his death are unclear and an inquest will be held.

Foreign Office rules out legal action over Patten

By Andrew Pierce, Political Correspondent

THE Foreign Office security investigation into Chris Patten, the former Governor of Hong Kong, will recommend that no action is taken. Senior Whitehall sources said last night that the inquiry, which was ordered by Sir John Coles, the Permanent Secretary, would not propose prosecution.

The disclosure comes only 24 hours after the Government maintained that it had ordered the investigation because of the seriousness of the leak. It also emerged that more than a week after the inquiry was set up, Mr Patten has not been contacted by the Foreign Office about the claims that he passed classified documents to Jonathan Dimbleby, the broadcaster and author. Mr Dimbleby, who is alleged to have used the

material in his book *The Last Governor*, has also not been approached.

The first that the two men knew about an investigation was when they were contacted on Saturday by *The Sunday Times*. A friend of Mr Dimbleby said last night: "He has emphatically not had an approach from the Foreign Office or any agency of the Government."

The Tories seized on the disclosure as further evidence that the inquiry details had been disclosed by aides of Tony Blair to divert attention from Robin Cook's marriage break-up and the investigation into the suicide note of a Labour MP, which blamed senior colleagues for a whispering campaign. The Patten story came at the end of a week in which the Labour Party had

failed, as expected, to win the Uxbridge by-election.

A senior Tory said: "We were told yesterday it was a matter of utmost seriousness. We are told the following day it is such a grave issue neither of the people at the centre of the investigation has been contacted. It was a deliberate attempt to smear Chris Patten to manipulate the news."

Mr Dimbleby, interviewed on Radio 4's *Today* programme, did not answer directly when asked if Mr Patten had leaked secret documents to him. "I have made it very clear that I had lots of conversations with Chris Patten, lots of conversations with other people, and I had lots of conversations on confidential terms with those people."

Leading article, page 17

Share sale

Continued from page 1
Last week Mr Blair told the Commons during exchanges with William Hague, the Tory leader, that the campaign was "vile and scurrilous".

John Redwood, the Shadow Trade and Industry Secretary, who led the campaign, said last night that it had been justified by Lord Simon's announcement.

"This is an incredible U-turn. Until now we had been told the earliest date was January 1998. By agreeing to sell his shares in BP the minister and the Government have acknowledged that we were right," he said.

The Tories will now turn up the heat on Margaret Becker, the President of the Board of Trade, who in a series of written Commons answers, had maintained that there was no possibility of the shareholding being reviewed until January 1.

Bruce Anderson, page 16
Leading article, page 17
BP results, page 23

Ulster tops millennium spending chart

By Damian Whitworth

MORE than twice as much money is being spent per head of the population on celebrating the millennium in Northern Ireland than any region of England.

Wales and Scotland are also well ahead of England in securing funding for projects, according to figures

released yesterday. Northern Ireland has been granted more than £46 per head of population by the Millennium Commission. Wales has almost £35, and Scotland £30. The worst-off region is the East Midlands has less than £6 a head, while the South East has about £8 and London £16, although this did not take into account the £400 million towards the New Millennium Experi-

ence at Greenwich. One reason for the disparity has been the huge role played by European Union regional development funds in providing cash to match that from the Commission.

More affluent regions do not have such money available and so fewer proposals have been forthcoming. Attempts to create a more even spread of funding with the third and final

batch of capital projects, due to be announced in the autumn, are in doubt amid fears about the amount of cash left in the Commission's budget to fund them. It is locked in talks with the Department of Culture following the Government's decision to reduce its portion of the lottery money by setting up a sixth "good cause" of healthy lifestyles and extra school activities.

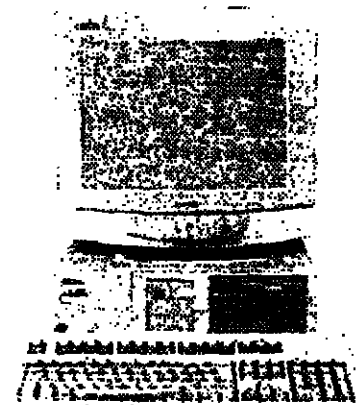
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Clinton bans federal workers from smoking on office doorsteps



NO SMOKING
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Sign of the times

FROM IAN BRODIE
IN WASHINGTON

NIPPING outside for a quick cigarette will no longer be feasible for American government workers under a decree to be signed by President Clinton.

It will ban people from lighting up around the entrances to federal buildings, a practice that has grown in reaction to the steady increase of no-smoking offices. Most government buildings in Washington have

knots of smokers taking a break from work to sneak a few quick drags on the doorstep. Their presence is often marked by a litter of cigarette ends.

Now that is to end under the broadest smoking ban on federal property ever enforced. It will also extend to many places currently exempt, including clubs for military officers. Mr Clinton has been under pressure to sign the executive order from anti-smoking members of Congress, who complain that non-smokers should not have to experience

passive inhalation on the way through entrances.

Just how far smokers will be banished from doorways was unclear, but Silt was mentioned in an early draft of the new policy. "Moving Silt would put me in the middle of the road, so I'll stand there and be hit by a car," grumbled Ken McMillon through a cloud of smoke outside the Veterans Administration building.

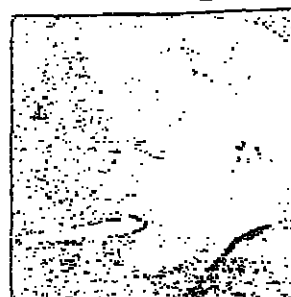
Equally upset was Nikiesha Lucas, who works in a gift shop at the Justice

Department, where presumably the new law would be rigorously enforced. She said: "They really have some ridiculous laws. I have a very stressful job. I don't smoke but three cigarettes a day, and I need them."

The prohibition on outdoor smoking was labelled unfair by the Tobacco Institute, the cigarette manufacturers' lobbying arm. Its spokesman, Thomas Lauria, said the ban was unjustified by any evidence of harm to non-smokers in the open air, and "if we start banning all behav-

iour that annoys one another, we're going to be a straitjacket society before you know it."

Mr Clinton, an occasional cigar smoker, was persuaded by his wife, Hillary, to ban all smoking in the White House when he was first elected, but he never cracked down on the patchwork of smoking rules among other branches of government. His new decree will set a standard no-smoking policy, with rare exceptions such as rooms with separate ventilation systems.



Clinton: a cigar smoker
ALAN WELLS

City firms set the lead in banning open-air smokers

BRITISH companies which ban smoking in the office are preventing their employees from going out to the entrance steps for a cigarette, or even to the car park.

Growing numbers of City institutions, hospitals and factories are banning smoking outside their premises, and some employees have been sacked for smoking on the doorstep. Tolerance is wearing particularly thin in the City of London, where merchant banks, insurance houses and trade exchanges say that it presents the wrong image to clients.

Assicurazioni Generali, the Italian insurance broker with offices in Fenchurch Street, London, displays a prominent sign in its doorway warning of the smokers. A spokesman for the firm said: "It's a case of obstruction. We have people coming in and out all day long. If the door is blocked up by smokers, it's a real problem. We have a no-smoking office. Employees are free to leave for a smoke as long as they don't do it right outside."

At Walsingham House, in Seething Street, which is owned by the Prudential, a sign warns employees: "Strictly no smoking on front entrance steps." The Stock Exchange, the London Metal Exchange (LME) and the futures exchange, Liffe, all provide small smoking areas for their traders and clerks, but encourage staff not to smoke outside the building. "You don't want a bunch of grubby traders hanging around outside puffing away," said an

Employers are
telling staff that
it is presenting
a bad image,
reports Mark
Henderson

LME spokesman. "It presents entirely the wrong image."

LME employees, though, were taking little notice yesterday of the exchange's policy on smoking outside the Leadenhall Street building. One clerk said that she usually smoked in the smoking room but had been driven outside by broken air conditioning. "It's pretty disgusting in there when it's hot."

A colleague said: "I know it doesn't look good, but I've got to have a fag."

The merchant bank Kleinwort Benson Investment Management allows smoking in the office only after 6pm, has no designated smoking room, and bans its staff from smoking near the building. Kevin John, a computer engineer, said: "If you need a fag, everyone goes to a little alleyway behind the building. The bank hates the idea of clients having to fight their way through a bunch of smokers."

Some employers also say that smoking outside wastes time, and makes employees hard to find in an emergency.

Most hospitals have banned outdoor smoking for this reason. The Stobhill Hospital in Glasgow and the Carlisle NHS Trust reversed smoking bans within the hospitals, providing designated smoking rooms, because they found it impossible to find staff, patients and visitors who had left for a cigarette.

Several workers have been dismissed for smoking outdoors. Lee Shaw, a factory worker with Ashton Foods in Manchester, was sacked in May after he was caught smoking in a no-smoking car park. A carer at an old people's home in Newark, Nottinghamshire, lost her job last year when she was accused of smoking outside when smoking was banned throughout the grounds.

The campaign group Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) believes that smokers' needs should be catered for in an office environment. "Smoking outside sends out the wrong image, but it should not be necessary if smokers had proper designated areas inside their offices."

Marjorie Nicholson, director of the smokers' rights group Forest, said that firms could not stop workers smoking on public streets. "I can understand that smokers clustered in a doorway can look bad, but until they give us an alternative there is little option. It is unfair to stop smoking outside when they give us no facilities inside. There is usually a blanket ban or a policy, smelly hole they call a smoking room."



Two smokers taking a quick break outside their offices in the City of London yesterday. Companies say the practice is bad for their image

Roadside fumes are as bad as cigarettes



MEDICAL BRIEFING

PRESIDENT Clinton's ban on smoking on government property, even by staff outside their offices, is presumably motivated in the main by concern for their health and for that of passers-by. He may also feel that state employees standing around smoking give a bad impression.

It has been suggested that smokers should be 50ft from doorways before lighting up. However, research by Dr Jan Polnicki, of St George's Hospital Medical School, London, has suggested that up to 6,000 deaths a year from heart disease may be the result of

exposure to car exhausts, and that one in 50 heart attacks treated by London cardiologists is caused by car fumes. It would appear that if smokers are encouraged to smoke by the roadside, they may be getting a double dose of carbon monoxide: 90 per cent of the carbon monoxide in the urban atmosphere comes

from vehicles, and the highest concentrations are at the roadside.

Carbon monoxide so interferes with the efficient transport of oxygen around the body that neither brain and heart may receive enough. Cigarette smoking increases the level of carbon monoxide in the blood so much that the

level can indicate how deeply a smoker inhales.

Clinical experience supports the President's decision. Research among Dutch lorry drivers showed that even non-smokers with heart disease developed angina after sitting in smoke-filled huts. People with heart disease, although non-smokers, experience chest pain when sharing a car with heavy smokers.

Office workers who smoke by the road and whose coronary arteries are so narrowed that the heart muscle is already suffering from lack of oxygen may develop angina.

Higher carbon monoxide levels may cause headaches and drowsiness among those who had thought themselves fit.

However, the advantages of taking a few minutes' relaxing break from the computer screen have to be balanced against the hazards of an additional cigarette for the habitual smoker.

The President should encourage the fitting of vehicle exhausts that reduce emissions of carbon monoxide.

DR THOMAS
STUTTFORD

Week in jail for puffing drunk

BY A STAFF REPORTER

A DRUNK man who blew smoke into a woman's face when she asked him to put out his cigarette at a London Underground station was jailed for seven days for assault yesterday. Abdi Saeed, 43, also patted Samra Book on the bottom with his umbrella when she turned to walk away from him.

"You were drunk and smoking a cigarette on the platform of Earls Court station, and a member of the public properly pointed out that you were not allowed to smoke there," the stipendiary magistrate, Geoffrey Breen, told Saeed, a Somali immigrant, at Horseferry Road Magistrates' Court.

He went on: "As unhappy as it often happens these days, instead of apologising and putting out your cigarette, you blew smoke into that lady's face and then, as she turned away to leave you, you struck her twice with your umbrella. Whilst I accept that no injury was caused, that lady must have

been very frightened and distressed by what you did."

Mr Breen added that Saeed had been drunk and Miss Book had been on her own. "The offence is so serious that only a custodial sentence can be justified."

Saeed, of Ealing, west London, who has not worked since coming to Britain with his wife and two children in 1993, admitted common assault on Miss Book, 25, who lives in West Kensington and works as a waitress. He also admitted breaking the London Underground smoking ban during the incident at about 5pm on August 3.

Saeed, whose wife left him shortly after they arrived in England, was said to be living on £70-a-week income support and sickness benefit. "He is separated from his wife and, indeed, therein lies the problem," said Patrick O'Callaghan, in mitigation, adding that Saeed began drinking after the split.

Rice pudding a greater risk

BY NIGEL HAWKES, SCIENCE EDITOR

SCIENTIFIC evidence used to justify smoking bans in the workplace, let alone outside the office door, is very weak.

The action taken by President Clinton is largely based on a report by the US Environmental Protection Agency that shows a 19 per cent increase in lung cancer among non-smokers exposed to other people's smoke. This increase, though it sounds impressive, is so small that, if it were caused by any other factor, it would be dismissed as insignificant.

Other studies have shown that eating certain foods, even rice pudding, poses a far greater risk of lung cancer than passive smoking, or have failed to find any increased risk and have not been published. Among those that have, some show an increased risk and some do not.

Epidemiologists express increased risk in terms of a "risk ratio". Any figure greater than one implies an increased risk. Lumping all the published data together, the Environmental Protection Agency came up with a risk ratio of 1.19. But such are the uncer-

tainties of this kind of science that risk ratios of less than two are regarded as insignificant.

A recent study carried out in Uruguay and published in the *International Journal of Cancer* found that people who consumed large amounts of dairy products, including rice pudding and milk, were more than four times as likely to develop lung cancer.

Judy Buttriss, of the National Dairy Council, pointed out that other studies on breast cancer had shown a reduced, rather than increased, risk. "The difficulty of establishing after the event exactly what a person's diet was, and being sure that none was a smoker, makes studies like those unreliable."

Even if the results are right, the extra risk in real terms is small. The chances of a non-smoker getting lung cancer are one in 10,000.

Non-smoking rice pudding eaters, if the study is right, run a risk of three in 10,000 — still a very small absolute risk. But it is far, far greater than the supposed risk run by passive smokers.

Life for alcoholic who killed boy

BY GILLIAN BOWDITCH, SCOTLAND CORRESPONDENT

AN ALCOHOLIC was jailed for life yesterday for beating a four-year-old boy to death with a hammer.

James Reid, 59, denied murdering James Ward, from the Castlemilk area of Glasgow, but was convicted at the High Court in the city after the jury heard that police had discovered a trail of blood to his flat. Despite evidence that the boy's blood was found on his spectacles and trousers, Reid denied all knowledge of the attack and blamed his two dogs for smearing the blood on him when they brushed up against him.

The court heard that James disappeared while he was being looked after by his great-grandmother, Grace Boyle, 62, at her home in Castlemilk on February 11 this year. Mrs Boyle and her sister,

Margaret Stewart, discovered his body lying in the courtyard at the back of the flats. His skull had been badly damaged.

While ambulance staff tried unsuccessfully to revive him, police who arrived on the scene followed a trail of blood over the garden wall across Reid's lawn and on to his back doorstep. Reid, who lived next door to Mrs Stewart, had been unemployed for 24 years. He had lived as a virtual recluse every since a conviction for breach of the peace and lewd conduct in the 1950s.

Inside the flat the police had to use torches as there were no lightbulbs. They discovered Reid covered in blood watching television, the floor around him strewn with empty sherry bottles and lager cans.

There was blood throughout the flat and Reid had made a



James Ward: beaten to death with hammer

half-hearted effort to clean it up. One of the boy's training shoes was found in a tea chest in his bedroom cupboard.

Witnesses said Reid had been staggering drunkenly in the street, drinking alcohol just before James disappeared. Despite overwhelming evidence against him, Reid

vehemently maintained that he knew nothing of the killing. In the witness box he said he would never hurt an animal, let alone a child, and detested violence.

Donald Findlay, QC, said that defending Reid was "an onerous" task. He said he was sorry that the answer to the question of why Reid, a man who lived quietly and bothered nobody, should commit such a murder would never be known.

A detective who investigated the case said later: "There is absolutely no clue as to why he killed this little boy. It is possible that the sheer horror of the crime has either blanked out his memory or made him too horrified to admit what he did."

After the trial James's father, James, and his mother, Amanda Stewart, called for the death penalty to be brought back.

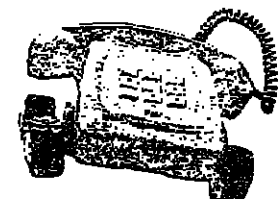
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Diesel lorry fumes linked to cot deaths

Invisible soot particles are suspected of deeply penetrating lungs and causing blood clots. Nick Nuttall reports

COT deaths may be caused by pollution from traffic and industry. Scientists have found a strong link between "sudden infant death syndrome", which kills ten babies a week in Britain, and tiny particles in the air produced mainly by diesel exhaust fumes.

Yesterday, clean-air campaigners demanded urgent action by the Government to toughen standards on particulates, the flecks of invisible soot measuring under ten microns. The findings come after research indicating that

up to 6,000 heart attacks a year are caused by air pollution. Malcolm Eames of the National Society for Clean Air and Environmental Protection, whose members include scientists and local authority environmental health officers, said: "Taken together, these two studies provide strong evidence that air pollution from lorries and buses may cause ill health and even death in infants and young children."

Current UK policies will not bring levels of this dangerous particle pollution down to safe levels even by 2005. It is essential that the review of the UK National Air Quality Strategy results in urgent action to tackle traffic pollution and protect public health. A spokeswoman for the Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths in London described the findings as significant and urged more research. "Although we need to

examine the data more closely, this would seem to be an important finding in relation to infant death," she said. "It supports previous research showing that pollution is linked with a wide range of infant respiratory problems and is in line with the strong research findings of a link between environmental tobacco smoke and cot death." The findings have been made from a study of four million babies by researchers

at the American Environmental Protection Agency in Washington and the National Centre for Health Statistics in Hyattsville, Maryland. The findings are published in the latest edition of *Environmental Health Perspectives*. The scientists studied babies born between 1989 and 1991 in 86 cities and towns across America, including Chicago, Cleveland, St Louis, Las Vegas and Detroit. They matched sudden infant death syndrome

with levels of particles in the air in the areas where the babies, aged 27 days or older, were living. The team, led by Dr Tracy Woodruff of the Environmental Protection Agency, found that the death rate among babies born in areas of high soot or particle levels was 10 per cent higher than in low particle areas. The researchers adjusted their findings to reflect the social and economic backgrounds of the families, their

smoking habits and whether the infant had a low birth weight that might increase risk of premature death. The researchers say: "While further examination is needed, the results... suggest that continued attention must be paid to the nation's air quality to ensure optimal health of infants and children." The way in which particles may cause death and ill health is being studied by experts. Last year Professor Anthony

Seaton of Aberdeen University, a health quality adviser to the Government, suggested in *The Lancet* that fine soot particles penetrated deep into the lungs and triggered a reaction similar to an infection. Blood passing through the lungs thickens, causing clots and blocks in the lungs and circulatory system. Professor Seaton said yesterday that the theory was gaining credibility following research in Germany. Laboratory trials were underway on animals. "I think we are going to be proved right," he said.

Auntie finds a bit of fluff goes a very long way

By CAROL MIDDLEY, MEDIA CORRESPONDENT

THE BBC appears to have acted on a suggestion that serious programmes should have a "fluffy" element to popularise them.

Flagship shows such as *Everyman* and *Omnibus* will next month feature the likes of Vic Reeves, Bob Mortimer, Ulrika Jonsson and a host of Elvis Presley lookalikes as



Lumley: Bhutan visit

part of the corporation's apparent drive to entice a younger audience.

The *Absolutely Fabulous* actress Joanna Lumley will also star in a factual series about the kingdom of Bhutan, one of the most isolated countries in the world. Michael Palin, named recently by the BBC as one of a handful of presenters who can command large audiences for serious travel programmes, features in *Full Circle*, which follows him 50,000 miles through 18 Pacific Rim countries.

Last month, a leaked BBC report expressed concern that global issues were passing much of the viewing public by. It advocated that populist figures, namely Reeves and Mortimer, Chris Evans, Gaby Roslin and Jonsson, should be considered as presenters for world programmes to draw in larger audiences. It also listed Clive James, Clive Anderson, Sir David Attenborough and Palin as personalities who could attract people to programmes set in a foreign country.

Yesterday, at the launch of BBC's autumn schedule,



Michael Palin, seen as one of a handful of presenters able to draw large audiences for serious travel programmes, in Chile for *Full Circle*

Alan Yentob, director of television at the BBC, denied the programmes constituted a lowering of standards of serious programmes or that there was a wholesale drive to enlist populist presenters. He said: "We are looking for a broad range of programmes across the board which add things to the

schedule, things that people want and what they watch. These popular figures can draw people sometimes to subjects which are less popular." In the arts programme *Omnibus*, the comedy duo Reeves and Mortimer are followed from their earliest days to their highly successful tele-

vision shows, *Big Night Out* and *Shooting Stars*. The programme features Jonathan Ross, Mark Langan, Jim Davidson and Terry Jones. *Elvis and the Presleys* features in the religious documentary series *Everyman*, and focuses on Elvis disciples who either refuse to believe he is dead or

who worship him as the Son of God. In the Joanna Lumley programme, *Kingdom of the Thunder Dragon*, the actress is followed on an expedition through the Himalayas between India and Tibet, where temperatures regularly drop below freezing. Ms Lumley tells the camera: "My only

concession to getting undressed is to take off my bra!" Earlier this week the veteran BBC foreign editor, John Simpson, somewhat jokingly advocated the use of glamorous presenters on television. He said: "It's true. Viewers want bimboes and bimboes. Who wants to see Martin Lewis? I don't."

BBC stands by decision to screen IRA series

By OUR MEDIA CORRESPONDENT

THE BBC denied that it was being politically insensitive yesterday by screening a four-part history of the IRA to coincide with the all-party peace talks in Northern Ireland.

Provos: *The IRA and Sinn Féin* to be screened next month, features interviews with declared killers and FBI surveillance film of terrorists, trying to buy Stinger missiles in New York in the 1980s. Steve Hewlett, the editor of *Panorama* who is in charge of the project, said it was not designed to cause controversy around the talks, which begin on September 15. He said the programme would be pulled if circumstances rendered it "inappropriate".

The series, which traces the rise of the Provisional IRA and Sinn Féin from 1969 to the present, claims unprecedented access to the Provisionals. It is presented by Peter Taylor, a journalist who has covered the conflict for more than 25 years. Mr Hewlett insisted that no active IRA members were interviewed for the film. He said: "We have not sought interviews with people currently active in the IRA but it is not an open organisation; people do not wear badges and there is a distant possibility that some were not telling the truth. But if we knew they were active, we wouldn't use them."

Firms foil plan for red light zone

By PAUL WILKINSON

PLANS to set up Britain's first official red light district have been scrapped after complaints from businesses.

Officials had wanted to establish a "tolerance zone" in the commercial district of Shalesmoor in Sheffield in an effort to end years of complaints about the activities of the prostitutes and kerb-

crawlers in a neighbouring residential area. They had hoped the prostitutes would move in only after the office workers had finished for the day. But when details of the zone leaked last week scores of businesses and professional groups warned the city council that they would move out, taking thousands of jobs away from Sheffield.

Yesterday the Sheffield Forum on

Prostitution formally agreed to drop its plan. The forum, whose members come from the council, the police, health authority and other public services as well as representatives of the prostitutes, said: "It is not an idea worth pursuing."

Those who objected included the Crown Prosecution Service, the fashion designer Julia Gash and Midland Bank, the city's biggest employer.

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Soldiers banned from resort after attack on tourists

FROM MICHAEL THEODOULOU IN LARNACA

HUNDREDS of British troops were banned yesterday from the Cypriot resort of Ayia Napa after four soldiers appeared in court accused of beating up two tourists.

The young British holiday-makers were attacked as they left a disco with their girlfriends in the early hours of Saturday, just a month after the Army had lifted a ban on troops visiting Ayia Napa. One of the men needed 22 stitches in his battered face. His friend had undergone a three-hour operation on a broken jaw.

Air Vice Marshal Peter Millar, the Commander British Forces, banned the whole of the 1st Battalion, the King's Regiment, to which the accused soldiers belong. That means the bulk of the Army's 3,500 uniformed personnel and 430 Ministry of Defence civilians and their dependents



Barry Ford, who had 22 stitches in his face

— 8,900 in total — can continue to visit the town.

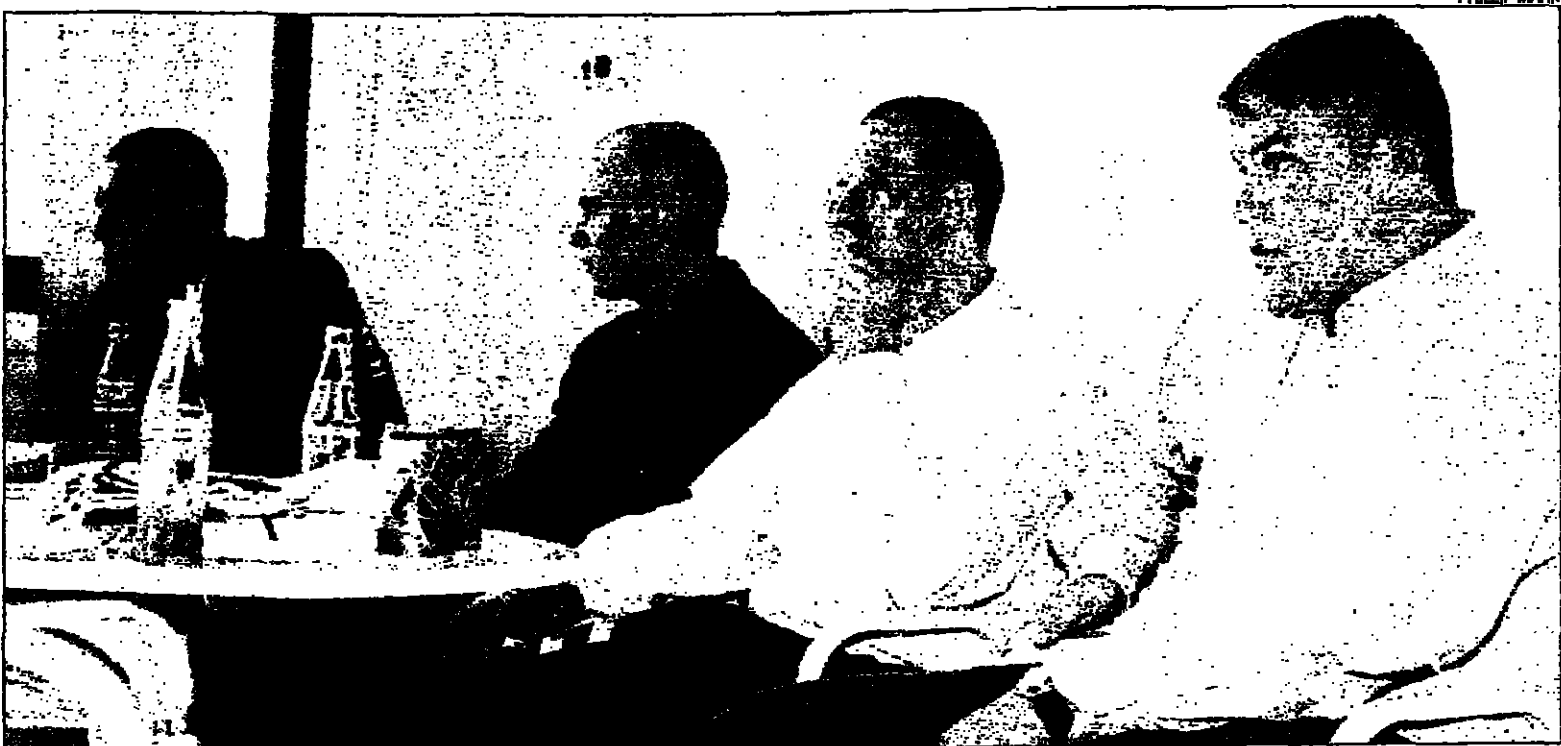
Roger Bell, 26, Tim Carter, 20, Steven Wolstencroft, 26, and Steven Girvan, 20, were released on bail until tomorrow after the judge at the Larnaca court granted their Cypriot lawyer's request for a two-day adjournment to study the case. The four soldiers, shaven-headed and dressed in

civilian clothes, said nothing during the brief hearing.

Watching in court were Barry Ford, 23, and his girlfriend, Claire Harbour, 22, both from Lee in southeast London. Mr Ford's face was heavily bruised, with stitches to wounds above his ear and eyes, which were bloodshot and nearly closed. His right arm was in plaster. His friend, Shane Bell, 23, a car mechanic from Eltham, southeast London, was still in hospital.

Mr Bell's mother, Claudette, said yesterday: "All I want is to have him home. Shane has got a fractured cheek bone and his jaw is wired up."

The four soldiers, stationed with their regiment at Dhekelia military base 20 miles from Ayia Napa, were charged with grievous bodily harm to the two men and actual bodily harm to Miss Harbour, who says that they badly bruised her wrist. If they are convicted and jailed



The four accused in the coffee shop of the Larnaca court yesterday, from left, Tim Carter, Steven Girvan, Steven Wolstencroft and Roger Bell

they will automatically be dismissed from the Army.

After yesterday's hearing Mr Ford, a quantity surveyor, said: "It's amazing — soldiers are meant to be defenders of the realm, they are meant to protect us, not kick us senseless."

Miss Harbour, a nursery nurse, said that one of a group of eight soldiers had pinned her to the ground and made

her watch as Mr Ford and Mr Bell were punched and kicked unconscious. "I thought Barry was dead," she said.

The couple, who were on a two-week holiday, said that they would fly home today but were willing to return to give evidence. They did not expect Mr Bell to be well enough to return with them.

Ayia Napa is the resort where three Royal Green Jack-

ets had been drinking the night they sexually assaulted and battered to death a Danish tour guide three years ago. Army commanders declared the resort out of bounds to all British forces and the United Nations peacekeeping force but as discipline improved the ban was gradually reduced to a curfew and lifted on July 1.

The swift decision to impose an indefinite ban on the King's

Regiment was seen as an attempt to prevent any backlash by the local community and to show that the Army is taking the incident seriously. Mervyn Wynne Jones, a spokesman for the British Bases in Cyprus, said the Army was making clear that drunken and loutish behaviour would not be tolerated although most troops had a good relationship with the

community and a wider ban would not be considered.

But Dr Marios Matsakis, a parliamentarian and the former coroner who performed the post-mortem examination on the Danish tour guide, said the full ban should continue because British troops were "like animals" after a few drinks. "We're not learning from the past. There could easily be another murder."

Footballer fined £600 for pub sex assault

BY PAUL WILKINSON

THE former England footballer Carlton Palmer was convicted yesterday of sexually assaulting a woman in a crowded bar. Palmer, who blamed the strain of the case for the loss of his place in the Leeds United team and the club captaincy, was fined £600 with £338 costs.

After the verdict at Leeds Magistrates' Court the player, who is reported to earn £7,000 a week but is now on the transfer list, said he would appeal. David Loy, the stipendiary magistrate, announced his decision after a week of deliberation.

Palmer, 31, had denied indecently assaulting an 18-year-old woman last January in the Square on the Lane bar in Leeds. The woman said he had touched her between the legs.

Palmer is due back at the same court next week accused of assaulting a policeman on the same night. Mr Loy added: "As a result, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on the evidence heard in this case as it could have an effect on the forthcoming hearing."

A Leeds United spokesman said: "The club has been informed by Carlton Palmer that he has lodged an appeal against the court judgment. In light of this fact the club will reserve judgment on any disciplinary action."



Palmer lost captaincy and place in Leeds team

Toddler killed by chest of drawers

BY A STAFF REPORTER

A BOY aged two suffocated under a chest of drawers when it fell on him, an inquest was yesterday. Jonathan Lewington had been climbing the 3ft chest in a bedroom at his grandparents' home.

Jonathan was staying with Teresa and Gordon Lewington at Ewshot, near Fleet, Hampshire, while his parents, from Nottingham, were in Japan looking for accommodation. His father works for ICI and was being transferred to Tokyo.

In a statement, Teresa Lewington told the hearing that Jonathan told her at 5am and had played with his two brothers — Adam, 10, and Alex, 7 — until breakfast. "Jonathan was playing upstairs. Adam went upstairs to check on his younger brother and I heard him scream."

"We went to Jonathan's room. He was lying on his back with his eyes closed. I couldn't see him breathing and his chest wasn't moving."

"I could feel no pulse and started mouth-to-mouth resuscitation."

Her husband dialled the emergency services and Jonathan was taken by ambulance to Frimley Park Hospital, but died a day later after being transferred to St George's Hospital, Tooting. A post-mortem examination found that he had died from traumatic asphyxia.

WPC Michelle Smith told the inquest at Basingstoke that she had spoken to Adam immediately after the accident on May 5.

The boy told of finding Jonathan underneath the chest of drawers "trapped by his head in the bottom drawer up to his neck and shoulders — he started screaming and lifted the drawer. Jonathan's head fell out and he realised something was seriously wrong."

After hearing the evidence, Andrew Bradley, the North Hampshire Coroner, recorded a verdict of accidental death.

Men put women golfers to fore

BY EMMA WILKINS

MALE golfers would like more opportunities to play against women, according to a survey published today. Only 9 per cent of respondents thought that women and golf were incompatible.

The latest edition of *Fora* magazine contains the results of a survey of 1,000 men aged 25 to 45. Paul Hamblin, editor of the magazine, was delighted with the results. "Golf has this reputation for being totally stupid and boring, where women aren't even allowed to walk in front of the clubhouse windows," he said.

"There is still the idea that women play golf during the week because they are nice middle-class housewives with time on their hands, while men play at the weekend. This survey shows that male golfers believe golf is a social thing for both sexes."

Mr Hamblin, whose maga-

zine employs one woman among a staff of seven, said that many clubs remained stuck in the past because of their attitude towards women golfers.

"I'm not saying we're going to batter down the citadels of private golf clubs. But the women issue is a fast-growing part of golf," he said.

The magazine asked about attitudes towards women who play golf. A die-hard group of 9 per cent answered that women and golf were incompatible, while 26 per cent thought women golfers were "great" but too old. Sixteen per cent thought men could learn something from women while 49 per cent said they wished men and women could play together more often.

According to the Ladies Golf Union, there are 219,000 women golfers in Britain.

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How to
make an
It Girl

MAGAZINE

Crushing defeat lies in wait for road-tax dodgers

THE ultimate warning for car-tax dodgers went on display yesterday. A white Ford Sierra was fed into a crushing machine to publicise the fate in store for some of the cars whose owners currently evade a total of £175 million.

A tough new scheme to enforce road tax begins in London this month and will spread across the whole of Britain within a year. Untaxed cars will be clamped in the street and offenders will face fines of up to £1,000, with the final sanction of the car being sold or crushed for scrap if the owner does not retrieve it within five weeks.

Baroness Hayman, the Roads Minister, watched the demonstration in a south London police yard and said: "Honest motorists are fed up with carrying the bill for the hard core who continually evade paying their road tax. Law-abiding motorists have nothing to fear."

A poster campaign showing

**Peter Foster sees
the launch of a
national drive to
make the £175m
cheats feel small**

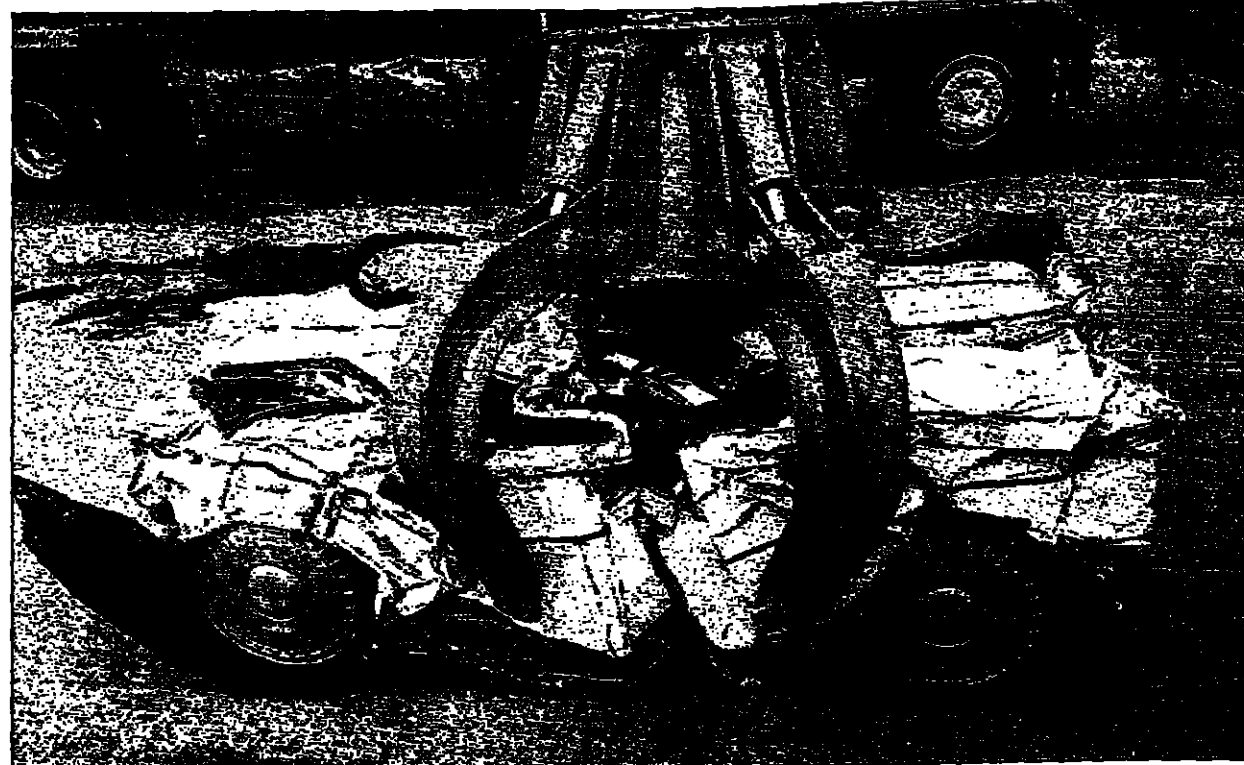
a crushed vehicle will be used to raise awareness of the crackdown. Echoing the catchphrase of Clint Eastwood in *Dirty Harry*, it will carry the slogan: "Do you feel lucky, Dodger?"

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency yesterday tried to calm fears that law-abiding citizens might return from a fortnight abroad to find their family saloon compressed into a block of tangled metal 4ft square. Haydn Madoc, head of enforcement for the agency, said: "We are

not targeting motorists who are a few days late buying a new disc. Our records show clearly who are the persistent offenders and, if there is any doubt about a vehicle, the decision to sell or scrap it will be delayed."

The new measures begin in London on August 18. Groups of privately contracted wardens will patrol the streets looking for cars without valid tax discs. Using hand-held computers, they will be able to check with the agency's central database in Swansea before untaxed vehicles are clamped.

Drivers caught out by the scheme will initially be able to pay £68 to release their cars, and will be asked to produce a valid tax disc. Alternatively, car and motorcycle drivers can offer a £100 bond which will be paid back if a valid disc is produced within two weeks. Vehicles left unclaimed after 24 hours will be towed away and impounded. The release



Going nowhere: the remains of the Ford Sierra that was used to demonstrate the ultimate deterrent yesterday

fee then increases to £135, plus £12-per-day storage. After five weeks, the bill will have totalled more than £600, and unclaimed vehicles will be crushed or sold at auction if commercially viable.

The scheme is an extension of a successful pilot operation run in five London boroughs in February 1996, which recovered £2 million in unpaid tax. More than half the 500 vehi-

cles clamped remained unclaimed and were sent to the crusher. The measures will be implemented nationwide, separately from local council parking controls, by the private firm Sureway Parking Services. The DVLA said that the company had signed a flat-rate contract and would not be working on commission.

Profits will be paid centrally to the Treasury. The Depart-

ment of Transport said that it was too early to predict how much money would be raised, but it was confident of recovering a sizeable proportion of the millions lost each year to tax dodgers.

In last year's London pilot scheme, the Treasury recovered £6 for every £1 it invested in catching offenders. Any owners who believe they are being unfairly treated can

appeal through their local magistrates' court.

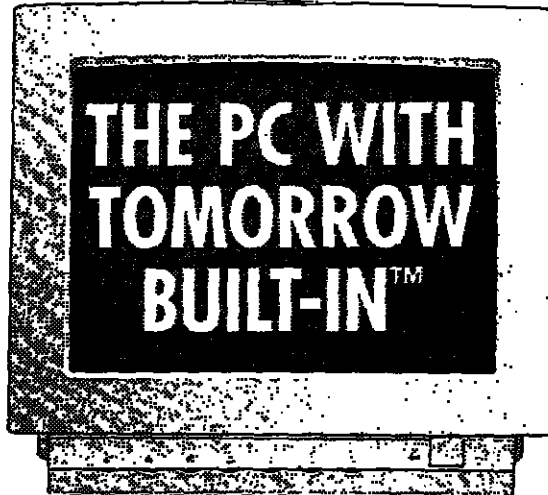
The campaign has the backing of the motoring organisations. An AA spokeswoman said: "People who fail to pay their tax cost the Exchequer £175 million a year. These people are also less likely to have insurance, which puts £10 on the cost of policies for law-abiding motorists and is a danger to all road users."

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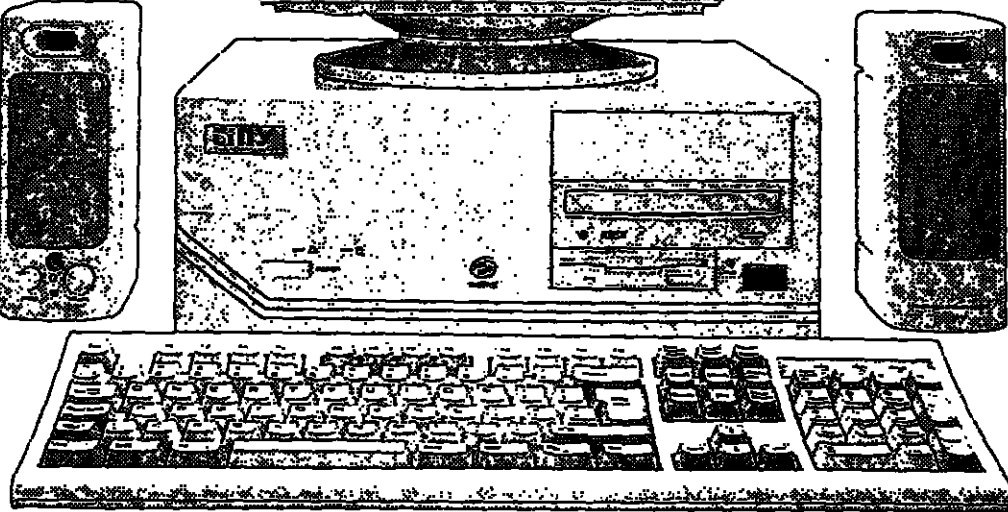
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Gas-cloud car runs without using fuel

By NICK NUTTALL
TECHNOLOGY
CORRESPONDENT

SCIENTISTS have invented a gas-powered car that does not burn fuel. The anti-pollution vehicle, which they have dubbed the smogmobile, turns compressed liquid nitrogen into an expanding gas. The resulting pressure turns an electric motor.

A prototype goes on view at San Diego, California, tomorrow. Abe Hertzberg of Washington University, who is leading the project, said that as the atmosphere is 75 per cent nitrogen, even millions of smogmobiles on the roads would be virtually undetectable in environmental terms.

"We believe a liquid nitrogen vehicle can match the performance and range of an electric car," he said.

The prototype does only a fifth of a mile to a gallon of liquid nitrogen. Professor Hertzberg is working on a more efficient system that will do up to three miles. With a 100-gallon tank, the car would do 250 miles between fill-ups. The professor says the tank would weigh less than the batteries used in electric cars.

Battery-powered cars involve emissions from the power stations where electricity is generated to recharge them. Lead-acid batteries also have a range of only 70-90 miles and threaten to increase heavy-metal pollution from manufacture and disposal.

Newer nickel-metal hydride and lithium-ion batteries offer better range and performance but are expensive and potentially dangerous, it is claimed.

Professor Hertzberg, whose research is backed by the US Department of Energy, said: "You would have to work very hard to hurt yourself with a liquid nitrogen vehicle. It is not combustible, toxic or corrosive. It is just cold."

Drink and drive limit may be cut to one pint

By POLLY NEWTON

A GOVERNMENT minister confirmed yesterday that the drink-driving limit could be cut by almost half to the equivalent of one pint of beer.

Baroness Hayman, the Roads Minister, said that a reduction was "certainly an option". She told the Radio 4 Today programme: "What we have got to look at is the fact that in this country we have had a lot of success with drink-driving campaigns — but there is still a hard core of offenders who are way over the limit and causing a lot of death and destruction."

Lady Hayman said she was looking at a range of options to improve road safety. "Several other countries have recently reduced their blood alcohol limits. We are looking carefully at the results of that because we want to be sure that what we do is effective and we would need to consult very carefully."

The current limit is 80 milligrams of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood — said to allow most people to drink about two pints. That could be reduced to 50 milligrams, or one pint, with the change possibly coming into effect before Christmas.

Most publicans and restaurateurs are likely to oppose the move on the ground that it would "discourage" people from going out. They argue that many drivers will opt to drink at home instead.

Nor is the change supported wholeheartedly by motoring organisations. A spokesman for the RAC said it was not certain to cut accidents or reduce the incidence of drink-driving.

Last year, 780,000 drivers were asked to take breath tests in England and Wales. Just over one in eight — 13 per cent — were either over the limit or refused to take it.

Climate change puts plant at risk

By NIGEL HAWKES, SCIENCE EDITOR

THE decline of one of Britain's tiniest plants is providing clues about the pace of climatic change.

Iceland Purslane — "think of the smallest plant you know and then divide by ten" — said the Warwick University botanist Dr Barry Mealyard — is now found in only two places in Britain, the Isle of Skye and the Ardaraich peninsula on Mull.

Dr Mealyard, who has been monitoring the plant on Mull, has found that since 1994 it has declined rapidly, in one area by 80 per cent. The environment is pesticide-free and remote from human influence, so the decline of the plant must be linked to changes in the weather or climate, he believes.

Iceland Purslane is unusual among Arctic plants in being an annual, so that its abundance is determined by its success in germinating in the spring.

Common in Iceland, Norway and other northern coun-

tries, it has probably survived there since the last glaciation more than 10,000 years ago.

The past few springs have been extremely dry on Mull, Dr Mealyard said. Whether that has anything to do with climate change, or was merely a temporary shift in weather patterns, would require longer study.

"It's too early to say that Iceland Purslane is doomed to extinction in Britain. But if this weather pattern persists it will soon become a question of how long it can hang on."

The plant lives in gravel terraces, growing to a maximum height of 4cm. The flowers are 2mm across, making it, Dr Mealyard admitted, "a spectacularly insignificant plant."

Its decline may not cause widespread alarm, because few people have ever seen it growing in Britain. The Iceland Purslane belongs to the same family as docks, and the larger varieties are used as

Fever of construction brought travel to the masses and wealth to the manufacturing towns. John Young reports

How railway age built up a head of steam

DURING the summer of 1895, two rival railways, the London & North Western and the Great Northern, staged nightly races from the capital to Aberdeen. On the journey of more than 500 miles, the competing trains averaged over 60mph, with overall victory going to the Great Northern's East Coast service. It had been a mere 65 years since the opening of the world's first passenger service between Liverpool and Manchester — two thirds of a century in which the stagecoach had been consigned to history and the canals long since outpaced as serious competitors.

Although the first trains were running some years before Victoria ascended the throne and traffic did not reach its peak until more than a generation after her death, the railways are inextricably linked with the Victorian age. They helped to create and service a social and industrial revolution, bringing travel to the masses, linking the new industrial towns and seaports, and stimulating unprecedented advances in engineering and construction. Looking today at the monumental achievements of those 19th-century engineers and architects — bridges and viaducts, soaring train sheds and gloriously extravagant hotels — it is strange to recall that the birth of rail travel was attended by fear, suspicion and at least as much hostility as nowadays greets plans for a new road or airport runway.

The opposition was led by vested interests — coach operators, canal owners and shipping companies — allied with landowners who resented the disruption of their rural idyll. Most owners refused to allow surveyors on to their properties, and ordered their tenants and estate workers to use force if necessary to eject trespassers. The young Robert Stephenson was among those who faced fusillades of stones and gunshot.

Rural interests were over-represented in an unre-



formed Parliament, notably in the shape of the notorious "rotten boroughs", whose representatives were bribable on a scale that puts today's sleaze scandals in perspective. Although the Stockton and Darlington railway, built primarily to carry coal from the Durham mines, opened in 1825 with relatively little opposition, in the same year the "antis" were able to muster enough support to defeat the first Liverpool and Manchester Bill.

It was only a short-lived setback. A year later a revised Bill received

the Royal Assent. The first services between two of Britain's fastest-growing cities were operating within five years and the railway age had begun.

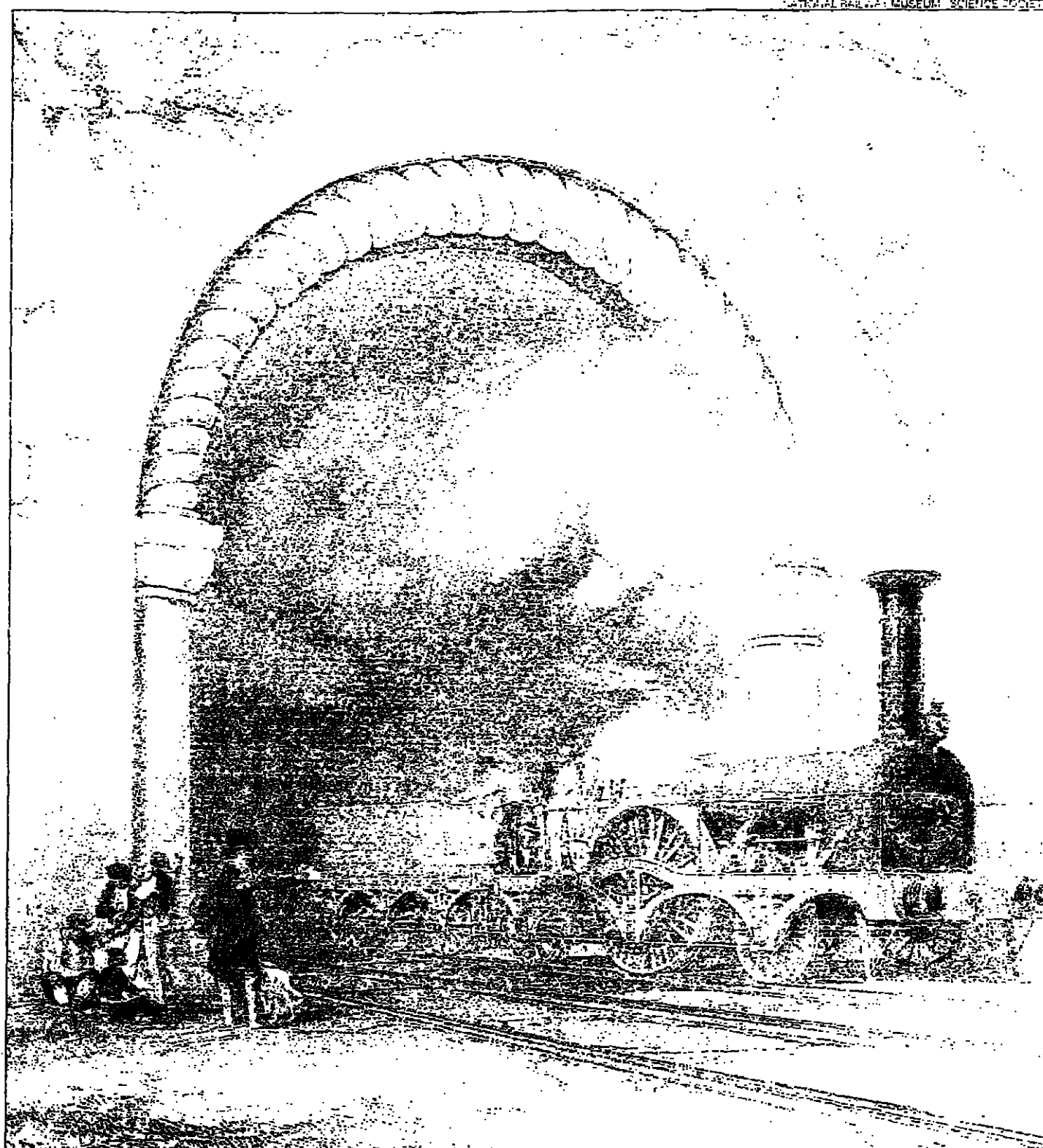
The opening was the signal for what Isambard Brunel, creator of the Great Western Railway, described as "an unhealthy state of fever". Would-be entrepreneurs rushed in their hundreds to climb aboard the footplate. In 1845 *The Times* reported that 620 projects had been put forward, costing an estimated £550 million; this at a time when the average labourer's wage was less than £1 a week.

Only a handful of these schemes came to fruition. But by the end of the 1840s the national network had reached more than 4,500 miles; by 1870 it was more than 15,000; and at the time of Victoria's death it was about 22,000, only some 2,000 miles short of its peak at the start of the Second World War.

They were still building at the end of her reign. The Great Central line from London to Sheffield was completed as the century turned, but it was one of the few failures; it was too late and passed through too few important places on the way. But it did bequeath us one of the capital's great railway hotels at Marylebone.

The impact upon the nation's way of life was enormous. Until the railways came, most people had barely travelled outside their own villages. Excitement was mixed with trepidation. The new horizons appeared to be clouded with danger and discomfort.

Such fears were by no means unfounded. Hot ash and cinders emitted from the engine furnaces were an ever-present fire risk and steam boilers were liable to explode. Word-of-mouth advice to passengers was that they should seat themselves as far from the engine as possible and with their backs to it. On the Liverpool to Manchester, watchmen were positioned every mile or so to clear stones and deter vandals. The railway



Engineers and architects created a monumental legacy of tunnels, bridges, viaducts and gloriously extravagant terminus hotels

Symbol of progress stands test of time

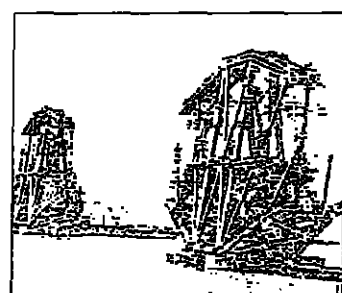
THE late Victorian era was a time of almost limitless self-confidence and belief in progress. Its triumphalism demanded symbols, of which the mighty Forth Bridge was perhaps the most potent.

The bridge, still in daily use, stands as one of the most familiar monuments of its age. It is immensely graceful and beautiful, yet it contains not a single bolt or plate of decoration. Every last strand in its massive lattice is there for a purpose, the purpose being a belt-and-braces structure that would bear the heaviest trains and withstand the foulest gales.

Completed in 1890 at the then astronomical cost of £3.5 million, it was a wonder of its age. The three great cantilevers and the approach viaducts together span more than 1½ miles and climb to more than 360ft above high water.

Construction required some 55,000 tonnes of steel, 22,000 tonnes of cement and 107,000 cubic metres of stone and concrete. Repainting the 145 acres of steelwork employs 20 men working on the 100 or so days a year when weather permits.

The bridging of the Forth and Tay rivers between Edinburgh and Dundee was the last great challenge the railway engineers faced, and the collapse of the Tay Bridge in a storm in December 1879 was their greatest setback. The disaster underlined the need for more



The bridge under construction

advanced technology, notably the use of reinforced steel.

In February 1882 a contract was placed with a consortium led by William Arrol of Glasgow, and John Fowler and Benjamin Baker were appointed engineers in charge of the project. Eight years of dangerous work, involving more than 50 fatalities, were rewarded when the Prince of Wales drove in the final rivet at a ceremony on March 4, 1890. Fowler was made a baronet, and Baker and Arrol received knighthoods.

The southern end of the bridge, a mile or so downstream from the modern road bridge, is happily situated close to the 10th-century, Hayes Inn at Queensferry, which takes its name from the ferry service that operated for centuries before the bridge was built. It is an attractive little seaport, but in summer is choked with visitors.

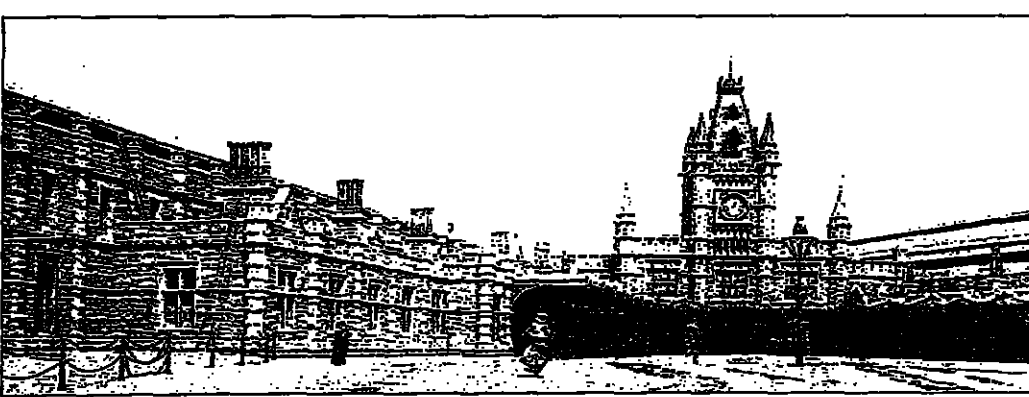
Westward to a wonder of the world

IF ANY single achievement could be said to typify Victorian enterprise and determination, a leading candidate would surely be the Great Western Railway. In its heyday, it was a byword for luxurious travel. Its first-class dining cars dispensed the company's own brand of whisky.

Among its admirers is Sir Neil Cossons, director of the Science Museum, who has suggested that the line between London Paddington and Bristol Temple Meads should be declared a World Heritage Site. Most of the original structures are intact.

"It seems to me to have all the ingredients of a masterpiece," he says. "It combines a simple, direct route with the highest quality engineering. Apart from the loss of the original station at Swindon and the roof at Bath, it has retained almost all the elements of an early Victorian railway. It was conceived and meticulously planned by one of the greatest engineering geniuses. Isambard Kingdom Brunel characteristically wasted little time in fulfilling his vision. He completed his survey in three months in

Brunel's Great Western Railway is an engineering masterpiece



Built on the right lines: Bristol Temple Meads station at the turn of the century

early 1833. Work began in 1835 and the 117-mile line was opened eight years later.

The Great Western network was later to expand to Devon and Cornwall, Wales, the West Midlands and Birkenhead. Its original purpose, however, was to provide a fast link between Bristol and London. The great port of Bristol, from which merchant

venturers had voyaged to Asia, the Americas and the Indies, was under threat from newer competitors and the railway was seen as the key to reviving its fortunes. GWR directors established their boardroom not in London but at Temple Meads.

The original station at Temple Meads, completed in 1840, has been superseded by a larger

building near by, but remains intact with its original train shed. A new British Empire and Commonwealth Museum is due to open there next month.

The hilly western section of the line offered the biggest challenges, notably overcome by the construction of Box Tunnel, which took five years and which rises from the Avon valley into the

Cotswolds. The restored western portion can be seen from a small viewing platform just outside Box village. At the heart of the GWR empire was Swindon, a refuelling and maintenance depot which expanded into a huge engineering works, at its peak employing some 10,000 men. The works finally closed in 1986, but the handsome "village" of stone cottages has been restored and a former Wesleyan chapel has been converted into a delightful museum (open Mon-Sat 10-5, Sun 2-5).

Approaching London, the line crosses the Thames on the remarkable Maidenhead viaduct, just south of the A4. A plaque observes that the twin brick spans, completed in 1838, are the longest and flattest in the world, each 128ft long and only 24ft high.

For his London terminus, Brunel designed what Benjamin described as "a conservatory in a railway cutting", fronted by the first great railway hotel. Today's station concourse was originally the garden, whence on February 2, 1901, the corpse of Queen Victoria was conveyed on its final journey to Windsor.



TOMORROW

The world of Victorian crime: a serial killer whose headcount has rarely been equalled, and the incompetent debut of the CID

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Solvent abuse blamed for 7-year-old's death

By PAUL WILKINSON

A BOY aged seven is thought to be the youngest person in Britain to die from solvent abuse.

Christopher Patrick Smith was found unconscious in the cab of a pick-up truck with an opened tin of puncture repair cement lying near by. He died in hospital three hours later. A pathologist was last night attempting to diagnose precisely the cause of his death and samples have been sent for examination by toxicologists.

Christopher was found by his grandmother, who had spent three hours searching for him. He lived with his grandparents, Jack and Susan Smith, on a council caravan site for travelling families in York. He was one of six children.

Mrs Smith found him at 10pm on Saturday, slumped face down on the passenger seat of the truck and instantly recognised his white T-shirt.

He was alone. She said: "I could just see him in the cab and was squealing at him to respond." She contacted the boy's father, also Christopher, who lives in a separate caravan, and he took his son by car to York District Hospital a mile away. Medical staff worked for three hours to save him but the boy failed to regain consciousness.

Mrs Smith said: "It seems the fumes from the can got the better of the lad. We don't know where the solvent came from. It is suspected he had been sniffing but it could all be just a tragic accident. Frankly I can't see him deliberately inhaling the stuff. We are all devastated by what has happened."

Detective Chief Inspector David Hunt, of York police, was yesterday trying to piece together Christopher's movements. "He was found in the truck cab. The can of liquid



Christopher, found in cab of pick-up truck

just found the tin of tyre cement lying around the site."

Nancy Evans, director of Resolve, the only national organisation dedicated to the prevention of solvent and volatile substance abuse, said: "It is a tragic death and is the youngest yet recorded volatile substance-related death in the United Kingdom."

"We are extremely saddened by the news. We appeal to the new Government to look into creating a national strategy on VSA which is sadly lacking."

Latest figures from the Health Education Authority show that the number of deaths in England caused by solvent and aerosol abuse rose from 48 in 1994 to 56 in 1995. Geoff Webb, the HEA's drugs and solvents campaign manager, said: "It is vital young people find out as much as they can about solvents. The message is quite simple: they can and do kill instantly and at such a young age, with huge impact on family and friends."

cement was on the ground outside but the screw-on cap was in the vehicle."

He said the strong-smelling liquid adhesive had a trichloro-ethylene base and smelt like dry-cleaning fluid. Christopher's grandfather said: "I can't understand why he should sniff the stuff, unless he was experimenting. It is more likely it was all a horrible accident and that he

More die from glue-sniffing

Ian Murray on shop-bought substances that are deadlier than Ecstasy

DEATHS among teenagers from glue-sniffing and other solvent abuse have increased for the first time in a decade. The latest annual figures compiled for the Health Department show that inhaling glue, gases and aerosols killed 56 people, mostly youngsters — eight more than in the previous year.

About eight times more people are killed by solvents than by Ecstasy but the deaths go largely unreported. Solvent substances, which can be bought over the counter, have killed 1,126 people since 1985, about half the number who have died from well-publicised dangerous opiates such as heroin and methadone.

The biggest increase in solvent deaths was in the Midlands, from 7 to 17 in the year. In the South, they rose from 19 to 26. But in the North West, Yorkshire and Humberside, where such incidents are usually high, they fell by half.

One of the problems in interpreting the reasons for the figures is that they are two

years out of date. There is enormous difficulty in compiling accurate statistics for deaths from products that can be obtained so easily has shocked the Health Education Authority, which yesterday warned parents about the dangers as the summer holidays get under way and children are more likely to experiment with substances.

Geoff Webb, the authority's drugs and solvents campaign manager, said: "The message

sioned by the Health Department.

The unexpected rise in deaths from products that can be obtained so easily has shocked the Health Education Authority, which yesterday warned parents about the dangers as the summer holidays get under way and children are more likely to experiment with substances.

Geoff Webb, the authority's drugs and solvents campaign manager, said: "The message

with solvents is quite simple — they can and do kill instantly, and at such a young age, with huge impact on family and friends. Trained counsellors at the National Drugs Helpline can talk through individual concerns and send out guides on solvent abuse to young people or parents."

Youngsters are most likely to start experimenting with solvents between the ages of 12 and 16, with most deaths occurring among those aged 14-17. Signs for parents to look out for are a chemical smell on the breath or clothing, the child appearing drunk and probably complaining of frequent headaches and sore throats.

In a report on drug abuse last month the British Medical Association said that solvent inhalation was "a high-risk activity". Some deaths occur from suffocation when plastic bags used to contain substance are sucked in and block the air passages.

□ The National Drugs Helpline is available 24 hours a day on 0800 776600.

Rave party drug claim

ALMOST all the people who attend rave dances take drugs there, according to a survey published today (Richard Ford writes).

Of 520 people questioned at raves in the South East, 97 per cent had taken an illegal drug at some time and 87 per cent had taken one that evening.

More men than women take drugs at raves, with cannabis and Ecstasy the most popular. More than half those questioned also said they had

had sex with someone they had met on the dance floor.

The survey, by the drug charity Release, highlights the links between the dance scene and drugs by showing that ravegoers are up to three times more likely to have taken drugs than others of the same age. Most reported more positive than negative effects but depression, paranoia, fatigue and weight loss were associated with Ecstasy and amphetamines.



Viscount Cobham and Lisa Clayton at their wedding, held at Hagley Hall

Viscount weds yachtswoman

VISCOUNT Cobham, whose ex-wife, Penelope, left him for the former Tory Cabinet minister David Mellor, has married the "round-the-world" yachtswoman Lisa Clayton, it was disclosed yesterday.

The quiet ceremony on Friday was the first at Hagley Hall, the family seat near Birmingham, since it was granted a marriage licence. Only a handful of guests were present, including the bride's parents. Ms Clayton, a 38-year-old divorcee from Edg-

baston in Birmingham, and Viscount Cobham, 54, are thought to be on honeymoon in Scotland.

In 1995 Ms Clayton completed a 31,000-mile solo voyage round the world in her yacht *The Spirit of Birmingham*. During the 286-day trip she battled with mountainous waves, gale-force winds and twice faced death when her boat capsized. However, on her return it was alleged she had cheated and she was asked to provide the

World Sailing Speed Record Council with all her written logs for ratification. No action was taken and the record stood.

Viscount Cobham, a landowner who lists cricket and shooting as his principal interests in *Who's Who*, was granted a divorce two years ago on the grounds of his 43-year-old wife's adultery. She left him nearly three years ago for Mr Mellor, chairman of the Government's new Football Task Force.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Dentists' cuts raise fears over tooth decay

More than half of community dentists have had their budgets cut since 1994, according to a report today by the British Dental Association. It says that the cuts, made by health trusts striving to save money for general medical services, are jeopardising the oral health of those who depend on access to free treatment, such as the elderly, children and the mentally ill. One trust in three has closed community dental surgeries and nearly one in four is planning closures. The cuts are deepest in Northern Ireland, where tooth decay in children is worse than anywhere in Britain.

Doncaster move

An official has been suspended from a council that is being investigated by police. Graham Raynor, the assistant planning director, is the second senior officer to be suspended by Doncaster council.

Fatal river crash

A holidaymaker died after his head was crushed as his boat passed beneath a bridge. Edwin Dyke, 44, of Ogbourne St George, Wiltshire, was with his family on a cruiser near Wolvercote, Oxfordshire.

Dogs die in hoax

Christine Weeks, of Westfield, near Hastings, destroyed her two greyhounds after receiving a hoax complaint, allegedly from her council. It followed a genuine Rother council warning about the dogs' noise.

Mountain death

An Irish climber killed on Mont Blanc on Monday has been named by French police as William Ratray, 29. He and a French colleague, who is in a coma, had left the summit when they fell 1,200 ft.

The lost name

The owners of the Lost World Dinosaur Adventure Park, in Norfolk, are to change its name after the film director Steven Spielberg objected to it. The name was adopted after Spielberg made *The Lost World*.

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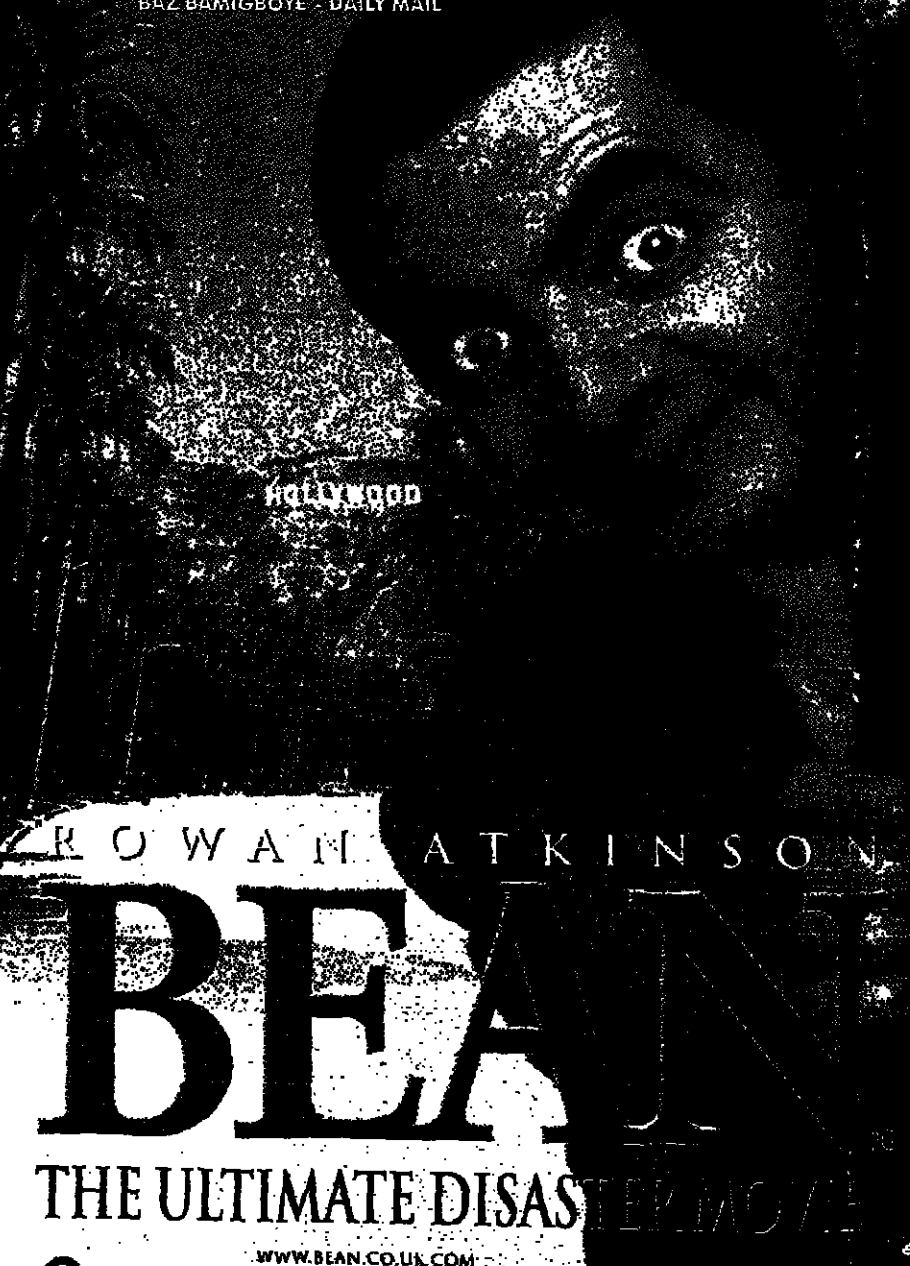
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Boom makes

US bomb trial told of 'plot to kill thousands'

FROM TUNKU VARADARAJAN IN NEW YORK

THE man accused of being the brains behind the bombing of the World Trade Centre in 1993, in which six people died, boasted that he wanted to "kill thousands" and let Americans know that "they were at war", the state prosecutor said yesterday.

Ramzi Yousef, also known as the "Engineer", faces life imprisonment if found guilty of conducting the attack four years ago. His trial, which opened at a US district court in Manhattan on Monday, is expected to last for several months.

In his opening statements yesterday, Lev Dassin, the assistant US attorney prosecuting Mr Yousef, gave a disturbing account of how the accused had gloated about his alleged deeds. Mr Dassin said: "He bragged about the bombing. He said that he wanted to topple one twin tower of the World Trade Centre with another and kill

thousands, sending a message to Americans that they were at war."

The prosecutor told jurors that Mr Yousef and Eyad Ismoil, who is accused of driving the van bearing the bomb into the plate-glass skyscraper's underground garage, were part of a "self-proclaimed army of terrorists" bent on bringing mayhem to the streets of America.

More than 1,000 people were injured in the bombing in February 1993.

Mr Dassin said, indicating in the direction of Mr Yousef: "This man ordered and mixed the chemicals to make the bomb." The accused, an electrical engineer, is alleged to have confessed the details of his involvement to police after his arrest in Pakistan in 1995.

Mr Yousef's lawyer asked jurors to keep an open mind until all the evidence had been presented. Mr Ismoil's lawyer, Louis Aidala, said his

client should not be convicted because of guilt by association.

The trial has come at a time when people are still reeling from the fright of last week's foiled attempt to bomb the New York subway by three Middle Eastern men who are alleged to have been potential suicide bombers. The incident has cast a shadow over the World Trade Centre bombing trial as the judge, Kevin Duffy, cautioned jurors against making any connections between the subway plot and the 1993 attack.

He said: "Some of the stories [in the press] were filled with what amounts to pure speculation, and speculation truly off the wall. The problem is, you are going to take an oath to try the case on the evidence here, not on somebody else's speculation."

The judge questioned each juror individually in an attempt to discern whether any of them was likely to be influenced in the judgment by the subway plot. Most jurors, who are anonymous for reasons of security admitted to Judge Duffy that they had seen headlines, newspaper reports, and accounts of the incident on the radio and television. But all of them were able to reassure the judge that they would not prejudice Mr Yousef or Mr Ismoil as a result. This is the third trial related to the bombing, the first two having taken place in 1993 and 1994. So far, four people have been convicted of taking part in the explosion. Mr Yousef, however, was able to flee the country on the night of the bombing and was able to elude trial.

After his arrest in Islamabad in 1995, he was convicted separately by a Manhattan federal court of a second conspiracy, involving a plot to blow up 12 American passenger airlines in Manila. That plot was not carried out. Prosecutors at that trial portrayed him as an "evil genius".

ROBIN COOK, the Foreign Secretary, promised yesterday to secure the future of Montserrat in the West Indies, which is threatened by increasingly violent volcanic eruptions, as a delegation from the island lobbied the Government for help.

Bertrand Osborne, Chief Minister of Montserrat, took part in the talks as hundreds more islanders fled the previously safe centre of the island when new eruptions rained ash and rocks on them.

Before dawn yesterday, the Soufrière Hills volcano erupted again, causing hundreds to flee nearby villages while the island's abandoned capital continued to burn. The colony's government had ordered hundreds more people evacuated from villages in the west-centre of the island, including the sole remaining hotel, just hours before yesterday's eruption.

Mr Cook said he had discussed options for Montserrat's future with the delegation of six ministers and businessmen. "The Government will

A Montserrat delegation was given assurances that the island's future is secure despite fears that it might be abandoned. write Glen Owen and David Adams

continue to place the highest priority on sustaining and improving the economic and social structure of Montserrat," he said, adding that Britain's intention was to secure a viable future for the island.

Clare Short, Secretary of State for International Development, who has allocated £41 million in emergency aid for the island, said that although residents are likely to be given the chance to leave, a full evacuation was unlikely. Some islanders have alleged that there was a "hidden agenda" to abandon the colony.

The new efforts will focus on housing schemes in a 15-square-mile zone in the North to relieve pressure on makeshift arrangements.

Montserrat is one of Britain's six

remaining Caribbean dependencies. But despite the long association, the island's main cultural identity has more to do with a blend of Irish and African origins.

It was first visited by Christopher Columbus in 1493 and was colonised by Britain as a sanctuary for victims of religious persecution. In 1632 Irish indentured labourers whose Catholicism was rejected in the American colonies were introduced. Soon afterwards the first African slaves were introduced and by the late 1700s they outnumbered whites ten to one.

The shamrock still adorns everything from passports to bars and brochures refer to "the other emerald isle". A popular folk dance, the "heel and toe," is attributed to Irish custom.

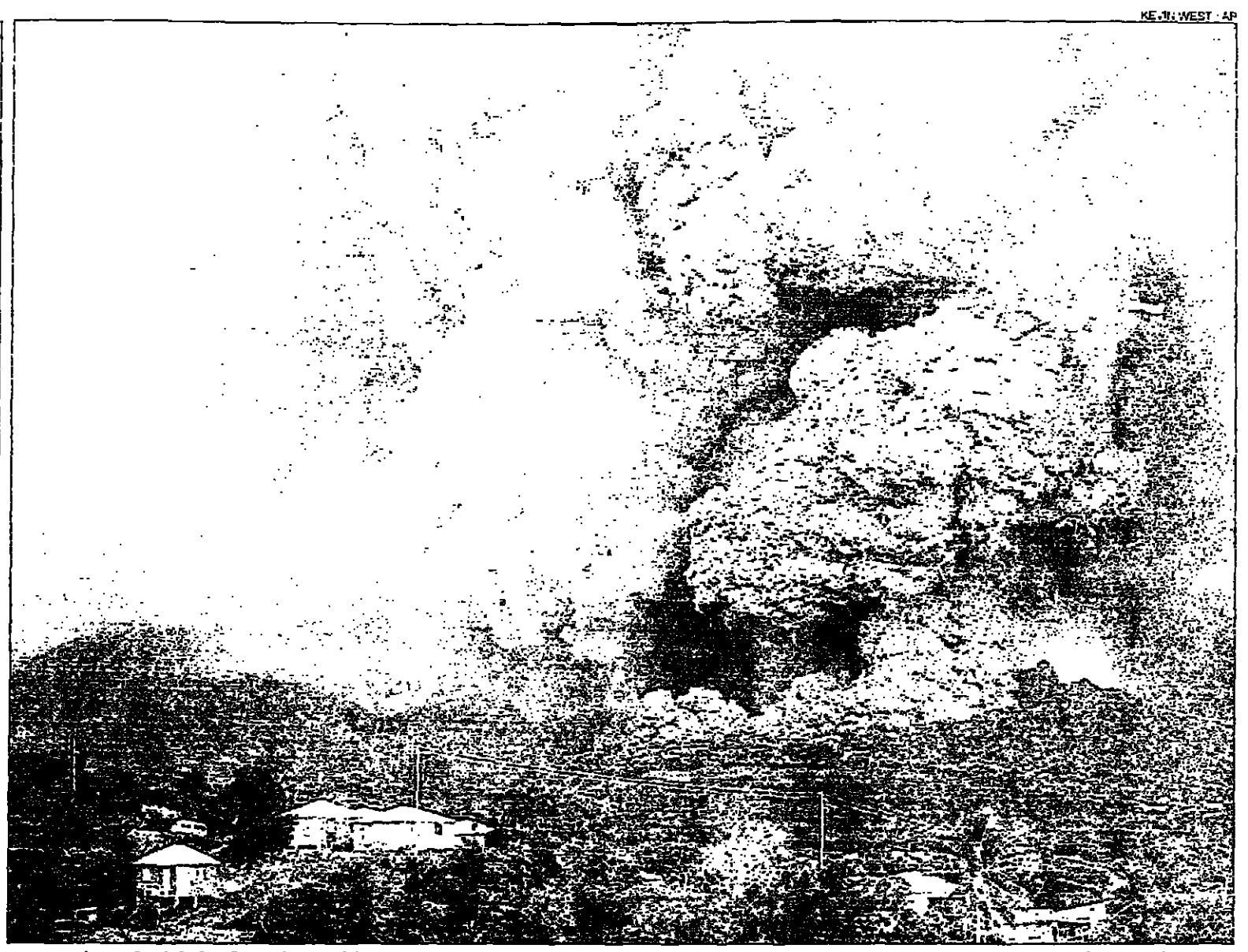
and the national dish, "goanwater," is said to be traditional Irish stew.

From 1871 to 1956 Montserrat was linked with the neighbouring Leeward Islands, but in 1960 a new constitution gave the island a partially elected government. Occasional talks have been held since the early 1980s to find ways of giving the 11,000 residents their independence.

The island has had its share of disasters. In 1965, a Pan Am jet crashed into the side of the volcano, killing 34 passengers. And in 1989, Hurricane Hugo ripped homes apart.

Even after two years of volcanic eruptions, most islanders say they want to stay on, and remain profoundly loyal to the Crown.

James Reynolds, a local tailor, who returned to his native isle after a 10-year military career spent largely in Scotland, echoes the widespread gratitude on the island for Britain's helping hand. "As far as I'm concerned, without Britain we'd be in a terrible state," he said.



Smoke and ash belch from the Soufrière Hills volcano which erupted again on Montserrat yesterday amid pleas to Britain for more help

Cook pledges aid to volcano island

Militants vow further Israel suicide attacks

FROM ROSS DUNN IN JERUSALEM

TWO militant Islamist groups threatened yesterday to carry out more suicide attacks inside Israel as a series of high-level diplomatic meetings sought to revive the peace process.

President Mubarak of Egypt said after talks in Cairo with David Levy, Israel's Foreign Minister, that he feared the latest crisis, caused by last week's suicide bombing in a Jerusalem market which killed 15, could lead to more violence if it was not resolved quickly.

King Hussein of Jordan sent a high-level delegation headed by Crown Prince Hassan to Israel yesterday with the intention of saving the talks from collapse.

The delegation will hold talks today with Benjamin

Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, one week after the explosions ripped apart an open-air market and halted the peace process. The meeting in Jerusalem is expected to set the stage for a summit in Amman, possibly next week, between the King and Mr Netanyahu. The move was one of a series of diplomatic initiatives to try to rescue the peace negotiations.

In yesterday's talks in Cairo, Mr Mubarak attacked sanctions imposed on the Palestinians after the suicide bombings and warned Mr Levy about the dangers of weakening the position of Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian Authority chairman, saying that would be "very, very dangerous to the peace process".

Indonesia in Russian plane deal

FROM ASSOCIATED PRESS IN JAKARTA

INDONESIA has decided to buy 12 Russian-made Sukhoi-30K jet fighters and eight Mi-17TV helicopters, a senior official said yesterday.

Earlier, it cancelled a deal to buy nine fighters from the United States, in a dispute over human rights.

Ginandjar Kartasasmita, the National Development Minister, announced the decision after two months of negotiations. The fighters cost \$34 million (£20 million) each. Russia will accept Indonesian palm oil, coffee and rubber as payment.

The minister said the deal with Russia was struck without any demands on non-related political issues, such as human rights.

Indonesia invaded East Timor, a former Portuguese colony, in 1975 and annexed it in 1976. The United Nations does not recognise its sovereignty there.

Last month Britain decided to honour an Indonesian order for 16 Hawk fighters, worth £160 million, despite new rules to curb arms deals with internally repressive or externally aggressive regimes.

The Indonesian Government, meanwhile, has ordered the state-owned Mervat Airlines to phase out its ageing Dutch-made Fokker F27 planes after one operated by a rival airline crashed, killing 30 people. The planes will be replaced by British Aerospace BAe-146/100s.

High-riding Thailand takes an IMF tumble

BY ANDREW DRUMMOND IN BANGKOK AND OUR FOREIGN STAFF

THAILAND'S place at the top of the world table for economic growth ended officially yesterday as the Government signalled its willingness to accept tough conditions for a £7.5 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund.

Rumours of a coup — dismissed by the Army Commander-in-Chief — swept Bangkok as General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, the Prime Minister, and his predecessor were accused of bringing the country to its knees.

One of the IMF conditions was a drastic shake-up of the finance sector. Tough measures introduced yesterday included suspending 42 finance firms to help ease the burden on a Government that has been compelled to lend hundreds of billions of pounds to cash-strapped companies.

Full details of the IMF package have yet to be disclosed, but they also include an immediate rise of 3 per cent in VAT, bringing it in line with countries in the region at 10 per cent.

Just three years ago Thailand was riding high after enjoying a year-on-year growth rate of between 7 and 10 per cent for a decade.

Critics say the Governments of General Chavalit and Nai Banham Silpaarcha, his predecessor, have brought financial turmoil to the country.

Anand Panyarachun, a former caretaker Prime Minister and the winner of the Magsaysay Award for government service — Asia's equivalent of the Nobel Peace Prize —

said: "I have never seen Thailand in such a serious crisis. This shows we cannot solve our own problems because there is no faith in the existing system."

In a financial free-for-all billions of pounds were handed out by banks and finance companies to influential politicians and businessmen, gambling on a booming property market which has since collapsed. Chaiyavart Wibulswadi, Governor of the central bank, told a news conference the suspended firms would stop lending and most other business dealings for at least three months.

The writing was on the wall last year when the bank bailed out the Bangkok Bank of Commerce, which had collapsed under the burden of more than £1.5 billion in doubtful loans, some to MPs.

General Chavalit said his six-party coalition was pre-

pared to slash up to 100 billion baht (£2 billion) from its 1997/1998 fiscal budget. He did not specify which government agencies would bear the brunt of budget cuts.

In May 1992, King Bhumipol Adulyadej stepped in after many demonstrators died in protests against the Thai military which had seized power.

The protesters accused Chavalit Choonhavan, the Prime Minister at the time, of corruption and "unusual wealth". Chavalit Choonhavan is an economic adviser to the present coalition Government of Thailand.

Mr Anand yesterday called for greater public participation in government. "I would like to see a more mature society, one that will find a solution to its own malady, without resorting to the monarchy," he said.

General Chavalit faces a no-confidence motion when parliament debates its new constitution charter.

Naval boost: Thailand's navy has taken delivery of an aircraft carrier, the first commissioned by a South-East Asian nation, a navy spokesman said yesterday.

HTMS Chakri Naruebet, which was constructed in Spain, arrived on Monday at the southern island of Phuket, where Admiral Wichit Channakarn, the navy's commander, made an inspection. The carrier cost £170 million and will carry nine formerly Spanish-owned Matador AV-8S Harrier jets. (AFP)



Chavalit: forced to seek IMF help

Boom makes Asia most expensive place to live

FROM PETER CAPELLA IN GENEVA

ASIA's economic boom is turning it into the world's most expensive place to live, according to an international survey, published yesterday.

Eight out of ten of the world's most expensive cities are in the Far East, with Tokyo and Hong Kong leading the annual list compiled by a Geneva-based firm, Corporate Resources Group (CRG). One of China's booming industrial cities, Guangzhou, moved into the top ten for the first time.

Only Moscow and St Petersburg upset the Asian domination, sharing high housing costs.

London shot up the rankings to 14th place, making it more expensive than Paris, Geneva and New York. Another Swiss myth, as the most costly place to live in Western Europe, took a knock, as Geneva and Zurich dropped more than 20 places, thanks to relatively stable housing costs.

Most of the changes were attributed to the continued strength of the US dollar. CRG rates American cities as among the most affordable.

In pure financial terms, Birmingham rivals cities such as Perth in Australia and Lisbon as one of the most attractive proposals outside the top 100. Johannesburg has a cost of living index which is less than half that of sixth-placed Singapore, but the survey pays little attention to crime-prevention costs.

The list, compiled for governments and mainly American-based multinational firms, is based on a basket of 200 items, including food, clothing, household supplies, cars and leisure. Housing rents are normally out of the survey given to corporate customers.

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Cosmonauts blast off to rescue Mir

By RICHARD BEESTON IN MOSCOW AND NIGEL HAWKES, SCIENCE EDITOR

RUSSIA'S future in space lies in the hands of two veteran cosmonauts who were fired into orbit yesterday to repair the stricken space station Mir, only hours after its two oxygen generators broke down.

As Mir's three-man crew struggled to deal with the latest problem on the accident-prone orbiter, Anatoli Soloviyov and Pavel Vinogradov were launched in a Soyuz rocket from the space centre at Baikonur, Kazakhstan, for what was described as Russia's most important mission in a decade.

The two men have been undergoing exhaustive preparations for their mission to repair the holed Spektr module on Mir and reconnect the station's power supply, damaged during a collision on June 25.

The mission got off to a promising start as the rocket made a perfect lift-off on its way to dock with Mir tomorrow. However, in space the prospects looked less positive. Only hours before the Soyuz rocket was launched, the two oxygen-generating machines broke down.

Russian space officials, who

are still reluctant to admit to setbacks, sought to play down the incident and emphasised that the crew had enough oxygen canisters for two months.

"This has happened a thousand times before, so it is not worth making a fuss about," said Viktor Blagov, the deputy flight director at Mission Control. "Yes we are concerned, but we have immense experience on our shoulders in dealing with this."

The mission has become an exercise in crisis management rather than serious science, according to Professor André Balogh of Imperial College, London. He said that the crew had been doing nothing scientifically useful for six weeks. "They are learning lessons in managing disasters in space. That could be useful, but I personally would rather not be part of the crew."

There is no disguising the very real sense of concern throughout Russia that one of the few positive legacies of the Soviet era may be about to come to an end unless Mir can be made fully operational again.

For the first time in years,

General Igor Sergeev, the Defence Minister, who is ultimately responsible for space operations, and Yuri Buturin, the head of the Defence Council, flew to Baikonur for the launch.

The concern of the leadership is understandable. In any Western country the Mir programme would have been halted long ago for safety reasons, after a series of accidents including a serious fire, the collision and numerous power failures.

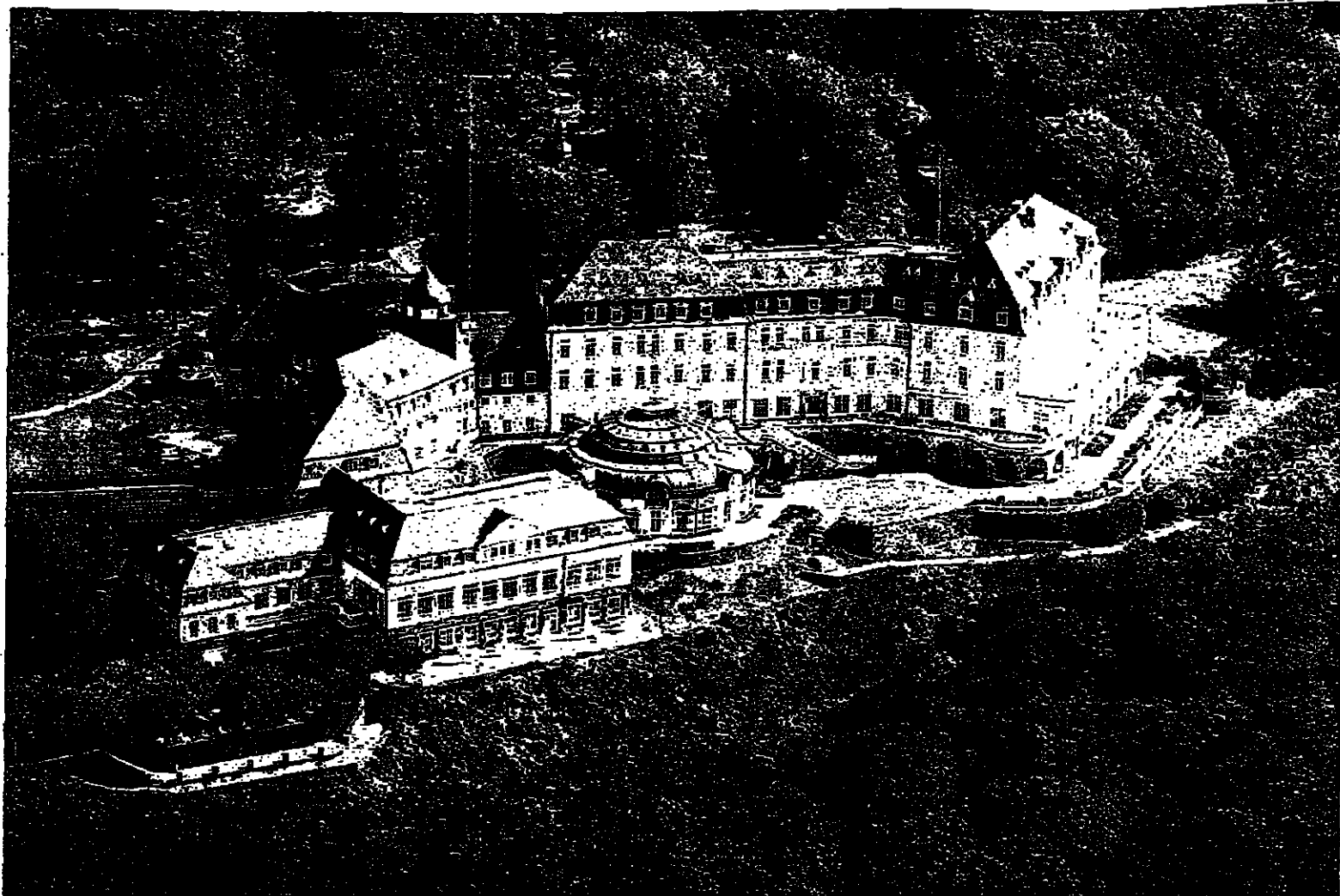
However, the Russians are determined to keep the 120-tonne orbiter going for another two years. Although Russia is short of cash for its space programme, maintaining manned missions on Mir ensures financial support from Nasa and European space agencies and will guarantee Russia automatic participation in the next generation of space exploration, the international space centre.

The new operation is one of the most delicate and dangerous ever attempted in space. Mr Soloviyov and his deputy are expected to conduct six spacewalks, beginning on August 20, including one operation inside the damaged module where they will have to work in near darkness and run the risk of having their bulky spacesuits torn or damaged in the cramped conditions.

The primary oxygen-generating system has been out of operation for weeks on end during the present mission, and back-up methods, including oxygen-generating candles, have been used to maintain a breathable atmosphere.

The primary system, called Elektron, uses electrolysis to generate oxygen from waste water. There are two Elektron units on board Mir, which have suffered a series of filter and pump failures.

The space station is so large, however, that there is sufficient oxygen on board to last for three days.



The sprawling grounds of the Petersberg Hotel above the Rhine make it ideal for top-rank statesmen needing high-security protection

Cash-starved Bonn sells off VIP eyrie

FROM ROGER BOYES IN BONN

THE German Government, strapped for cash, is putting up for sale its exclusive hilltop hotel which has housed the likes of Neville Chamberlain, Leonid Brezhnev and Yasser Arafat.

The Petersberg Hotel, perched high above the Rhine across the river from Bonn, is the jewel in the crown of the Government's extensive property portfolio. Now, in order to ease the country's budgetary problems and keep on track for European economic and monetary union, the sprawling estate is on offer to the highest bidder.

Built in 1914, the hotel houses visitors who need high-security protection — it is three minutes from the helicopter pad to the Chancellor's office — but also accepts ordinary, albeit wealthy, guests. The rooms cost between £250 and £400 a night and the guests have some unusual perks, including an 18th-century chapel.

The asking price will be about £70 million, a handy but not decisive contribution to plugging Germany's budget deficit, but the new owner will also have to find the cash to maintain 270 acres of parkland. The narrow,

winding approach roads make Petersberg attractive as a security compound, which is why it is favoured by Middle Eastern guests, but also make it rather impractical for most tourists.

Brezhnev, the Kremlin leader, had his own experiences on the road when he was presented with a Mercedes coupé in 1973. The Soviet leader collected cars and his aides had hinted broadly that he favoured this model. But Brezhnev crashed the car minutes after receiving it from Willy Brandt, a

short drive down the Petersberg hill. One theory is that Brezhnev drove the car into a ditch deliberately because he did not like the colour. The replacement was a different shade.

The dramatic river view from the presidential suite of the hotel may have lured Chamberlain into trusting Hitler. The Prime Minister stayed in the hotel in September 1938 during one of his missions to persuade Hitler to stay out of the Sudetenland. It was in the Petersberg that the outlines of the

Munich agreement were laid down. Hitler, of course, ended by ignoring the accord.

Despite these negative associations, the Queen was happy to stay there and other guests have included the late Shah of Iran and King Hussein of Jordan. In more recent years, the leaders of the warring Bosnian factions were put up there.

Whenever a VIP with top-security rating is lodged there, ordinary guests are barred from the hotel. That makes a stay there rather haphazard and has led to the loss of business: hence the annual government subsidy of about £1 million. There are about 30 bidders in the running, including millionaires and hotel chains.

Local people have use of the hotel's parkland and are determined therefore that the Petersberg should not fall into the hands of a reclusive millionaire like Michael Jackson. "That would be a disaster: there would be grubby fans everywhere and dog patrols around the perimeter," a nearby shopkeeper said.

Other celebrities, however, are welcome to make a bid. Michael Schumacher, the racing driver, celebrated his wedding reception in a large courtyard of the hotel.



Neville Chamberlain and Adolf Hitler drafted an outline of the Munich pact when they met at the Petersberg Hotel in 1938



THE MIR SPACE STATION

(module launch dates)

Core module (1990)

Antenna (1990)

Antenna (1990)

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Italy moves SS captain to prison

FROM RICHARD OWEN IN ROME

ERICH PRIEBKE, the former Nazi officer convicted of taking part in Italy's worst wartime atrocity, is to be moved to prison from the friary where he is under house arrest, according to Antonino Intelsano, Rome's chief military prosecutor.

Signor Intelsano said the Franciscan at the San Bonaventura friary at Frascati, in the hills south of Rome, had told him "they do not want Priebke any more". He said the friary had given the former SS captain refuge during his trial, but had not meant to "extend their hospitality" to include his jail sentence. He has been allowed to remain at the friary under armed guard since the trial ended two weeks ago.

Last month Priebke was found guilty of taking part in the massacre of 335 Italian men and boys in the Ardeatine caves just outside Rome in March 1944, and was sentenced to 15 years in jail. Because of his advanced age — he is 83 — this was reduced to five, of which he is likely to serve less than a year if the time already spent awaiting trial is taken into account.

Priebke was first convicted last year, after extradition to Italy from Argentina in 1995, but was released because of a statute of limitations covering crimes committed more than 50 years ago. After a public outcry he was rearrested, and his retrial opened earlier this year.

The uncertainty over Priebke's fate came as Italy confronted another facet of the Fascist past, the confiscation by the German authorities of valuables belonging to Italian Jews.

At a moving ceremony Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, the Budget and Treasury Minister, handed over to representatives of Italy's Jewish community a "treasure trove" of pocket watches, jewels, silver, necklaces, bracelets and gold teeth taken from Jews rounded up in Trieste during the German wartime occupation.

Trieste had the only Nazi death camp on Italian soil, at San Sabba.

Disgruntled tycoons hit Yeltsin 'heir' with corruption allegations

By RICHARD BEESTON

BORIS NEMTSOV, the popular, young Russian minister tipped to succeed President Yeltsin, has had his image badly tarnished by allegations of sleaze, bribery and abuse of office.

In the space of a few days, the energetic Deputy Prime Minister, who made his name as an anti-corruption crusader, has been thrown on the defensive by a concerted campaign to discredit his character and limit his authority. The attack was orchestrated by a group of disgruntled banking and media tycoons who last week lost a multi-million pound bid for shares in Svyazinvest, the newly privatised telecommunications company.

Mr Nemtsov hailed the sell-off as one of the first honest auctions in Russia's troubled privatisation history. But supporters of the losing bids, like Boris Beresovsky, the deputy head of the security council, and Vladimir Gusinsky, who heads a banking and media empire, accused the Government of bias in favour of the £1.1 billion winning bid by Uneximbank.

Mr Gusinsky's NTV, Russia's only independent net-

work, made the first attack accusing the 37-year-old Deputy Prime Minister of backing the winning bid to assure campaign funding for his presidential challenge in three years' time. It went on to accuse him of everything from incompetence to poor taste, when he was castigated for being too casually dressed for a government meeting.

Andrei Klimentiev, Mr Nemtsov's former friend and political ally, pressed home the attack with far more damaging allegations on Friday. The former businessman, who was convicted of stealing, alleged that, when Mr Nemtsov was Governor of Nizhny Novgorod, he accepted bribes worth more than £500,000 and took part in a scam to steal more than £7 million in government credits intended for a local shipping company.

The latest blow came on Monday when Aleksandr Minkin, an investigative journalist, published transcripts in *Novaya Gazeta* of a taped telephone conversation said to be between Mr Nemtsov and Sergei Lisovsky, head of a powerful media group. The Deputy Prime Minister re-

portedly demanded that Mr Lisovsky pay him more than £60,000 for his recently published book, *The Provincial*, so that he could include the money in his declaration of earnings.

Mr Minkin wondered how the slim volume of memoirs could be worth the hefty advance payment. Mr Nemtsov has also been accused of delaying his own anti-corruption legislation for three days, allowing many senior government officials to avoid revealing the whole extent of their assets.



Nemtsov: has started legal action over claims

In spite of the public campaign, Mr Nemtsov, who has just left for his home town of Sochi for a summer holiday, vowed to fight back. He has instructed Vitali Khakin, his lawyer, to file a libel suit against Mr Klimentiev and asked the public prosecutor's office to investigate the tapping of his telephone.

Despite calls for his sacking by opposition figures, particularly his old enemy, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, the ultra-nationalist leader, the young reformer is expected to survive the current campaign, albeit with his reputation battered. However, the row could cause serious long-term problems for Mr Yeltsin, who has relied on the close co-operation between his ministers and the powerful business community to guarantee his stability.

Mr Gusinsky and Mr Beresovsky were key members of an informal alliance of bankers and media moguls, whose funding and propaganda were instrumental in the President's re-election campaign last year. If a split has emerged between his Government and the private sector his own political base could be threatened.

Mosquitoes add biblical touch to floods

By ROGER BOYES

SIMON WILSON, a BBC producer, was proud to have bamboozled German police checkpoints and enter the no-go area near the swollen banks of the Oder. A sleepless night in a damp garden shed was a cheap price for good television pictures of the expected gushing of floodwaters in Oderbruch.

The floods did not come, but the mosquitoes did. Like all journalists on the sodden dykes of eastern Germany, his arms and neck are tattooed with mosquito bites. "They're big and bad," he says.

There is something biblical about this summer in Central Europe. First came the floods in the Czech Republic and Poland, killing almost 100 people and sending Germany into a panic. Then came pestilence, symbolised by the swimming rats and the fearful smell of the waters which are thrusting chemicals towards the Baltic. Another 5,000 people

are to be inoculated against jaundice and typhoid fever; the concern is that the faeces brought to the surface by flooded sewers will spread disease.

Now a plague of mosquitoes. Attracted by the brackish water, mosquitoes must feed they are in paradise. The heat gives a slightly tropical feel. These are the dog-days of summer when local farmers traditionally ban their children from swimming in the river or lakes: the heat and humidity force too many infected dogs or diseased livestock to cool down in the water. Sweat pours off the backs of the reporters delivering breathless commentaries to camera. They are natural mosquito victims, as are the 14,000 soldiers shifting sandbags. Medical supplies are being flown in not so much for flood refugees as for scratching soldiers who have an urgent need of anti-histamine.

In the Czech Republic Otakar Prazak, an environmental scientist from Brno, is talking of a mosquito invasion. Czech

aid workers are spraying areas close to homes. In Wrocław, on the Polish side of the river, town planners intend to smoke out the mosquitoes. "Perhaps we can half the mosquito population with this smoke action — even that would be a success," Dr Andrzej Puzio, the health chief of the Polish flood committee, said. It will not be so easy to combat the rats — the water level in the sewers is still too high — and there are now four rats for every resident of Wrocław. The authorities seem to be counting on cats to keep down the rats, but many cats have drowned.

President Herzog visited the German flood region yesterday. Helmut Kohl, the Chancellor, issued a statement to parliament praising the work of the relief organisations. Herr Kohl said that total federal government aid to the east would reach DM500 million (£165 million). Water levels are dropping, but authorities said again yesterday that the pressure on the dykes is still very high and so the danger of flooding has not receded.

Italian Alps claim 8 climbers

Bolzano: Eight climbers died and the wife of a senior German diplomat was missing after a series of accidents in the eastern Italian Alps, police said yesterday.

Four firemen from northern Italy were killed when they fell more than 330ft from the approach to the 12,600ft summit of the Great Zebur

mountain near the Swiss and Austrian borders.

Another three climbers died in a separate incident on the same mountain later in the day. One of them was reportedly a 44-year-old Alpine guide who had witnessed the first accident and alerted mountain rescue services.

"The weather is fine at the

moment and we have no idea why all these people have died," an official said.

Fifty miles further east, a 62-year-old man died after falling 165ft from Pelmo mountain near Belluno.

Anna Maria Neuner, 56, the wife of a German diplomat to the Vatican, went missing on Monday. (Reuters)

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ABOVE: Gunmetal silk bias-cut dress, £150. Silver cardigan, £120

Flattery and glamour are in the high street, says **Grace Bradberry**

Ren Pearce and Andrew Flonda have never made any secret of their intention to design expensive clothes for an exclusive clientele. Since launching their label in 1994, they have produced sophisticated tailoring and stunning bias-cut evening dresses — with price tags over the £1,000 mark.

In this rarefied strata of fashion, they are doing jolly well. The actress Francesca Annis, partner of Ralph Fiennes, wore one of their creations to the Oscars. They have also dressed Anjelica Houston and the model Amber Valetta. To the rest of us they have, so far, been an irrelevance, albeit a very beautiful one.

The news that they were to design a collection for Debenhams inspired both ex-

citement and scepticism in equal measure. Skimpily, voguish clothes aimed at skinny under-25s translate easily to the high street. It's much harder with clothes aimed at older women where the cut, the fabric and the silhouette are everything.

Somehow Pearce Fionda have pulled it off. They've kept the pronounced shapes of their trousers and jackets and the sweep of their evening dresses, without the clothes looking department storeish.



ABOVE: Pale blue jersey tunic, £70; matching wide-leg trousers, £80. **BELOW RIGHT:** Grape silk halter-neck dress, £180. All clothes by Pearce Fiorini for Debenhams at selected branches nationwide. 0171-408 4444

Summer Sale


Susan Duckworth's
Butterflies
from Ehrman Tapestry



Susan Duckworth's butterflies crowd together on this tapestry creating a wonderful kaleidoscope of phosphorescent colour. On a speckled cream background, vivid reds, apricot, topaz and ultramarines combine with paler powder blues, ochre, Venetian red, carnation and cinnamon brown in a cloud of overlapping wings. These fresh and cheerful colours make this one of Susan Duckworth's very best tapestries, and it is stitched on 14 mesh canvas to capture the subtle detail of the design.

Measuring 13" x 13" the design is printed in full colour on 14 holes to the inch canvas. 100% pure new wool from the Twilley range is used and the pattern can be worked in either half-cross or rent stitch. The kit costs £23 including postage and packing, and comes complete with wool, canvas, needle and instruction leaflet. When ordering use FREEPOST – no stamp is needed.

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ABOVE: Black silk ballet niffle-front chin strap Cream mercerized wide-lan trousers C-70 BOUTYV2R6PUEO-Brown Barberry

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Is this taking abridged too far?

With three shows in the West End, the Reduced Shakespeare Company must be doing something right. **Matt Wolf reports**

The Royal Shakespeare Company may have abandoned the Barbican for the summer, but this season there's another RSC company all its own. On Friday, when the Reduced Shakespeare Company starts previews at the Gielgud with *The Bible: The Complete Word of God* (abridged), the American comic vaudeville troupe will have three shows in the West End, a feat traditionally saved for the likes of Andrew Lloyd Webber, who is currently only one show ahead.

Over at the Criterion, the troupe has been ensconced for 17 months with *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (abridged), an Olivier nominee for best comedy. Last devotees of the only ensemble to put "abridged" after every title feel shortchanged, on Tuesdays the Criterion presents a third reductive effort — *The Complete History of America* (abridged), in which we learn, among other things, that "grow a penis" is an anagram for Spito Agnew.

Does this mini-industry represent too much of a good thing? For the audiences, evidently not: in a climate in which shows can topple like ninepins, this RSC has the resilience of a producer's dreams. "On a bad week, we do £20,000; in a normal week £30,000; if we do £40,000, we're popping champagne corks," says its co-producer, David Johnson. "Most West End shows could not run on that basis." Indeed, the company's tenure at the Criterion has done a lot to shift perceptions of that theatre as a West End graveyard. Patrick

We're selling the short attention span

Märber wanted the playhouse for an autumn transfer of his National Theatre sellout, *Closer*, only to be told it wasn't available: the Yanks are here, and for a long haul. "I'd love to be *The Mousetrap*," says the company's co-founder, Adam Long, speaking backstage on the day that the Shakespeare show notched up its 500th performance at the Criterion. "It's a fairly recent phenomenon that culture has become so disposable. There's a value to be had from doing the same things day after day: the insatiable appetite for that which is new is somewhat misplaced."

A co-writer of the Bible show who will continue to perform in the other two evenings at the Criterion, Long, 36, recalls the troupe's ascendancy in Britain from its initial run in 1987 at a 60-seat venue in the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

"We had come for the fun of it; we didn't think there was a career to be had. We had heard about the National Theatre of Brent at the Assembly Rooms, and here were these two middle-aged men in suits doing the same thing we were doing in a very calm and dignified way, and being absolutely hilarious about it. At that point, it started to dawn on us that it was possible to make a career out of our own peculiar, idiosyncratic rubbish."

That career has progressed apace over time, even if, as Bible performer and co-writer Reed Martin points out, "we make the bulk of our income outside the UK. In the public eye we're better-known in England, though there's much better money in America." With the America show, for example, Mar-



Cutting tall stories short: (clockwise from left) Reed Martin, who co-wrote and acts in the new RSC show, with fellow Bible performers Matt Rippy and Austin Tichenor

tin says the best response abroad has been in Singapore, where it is the Shakespeare show, perhaps inevitably, that resonates best in England.

"We do it the way people think three idiots from California would do it," says Martin, 37, who joined the RSC full-time during a Montreal stint in 1990. "We're selling the short attention span." Each show makes brevity the soul not just of wit, but of getting to the pub on time.

"Artistically, it's a natural thing that we should end up in London," says Long, who now lives here. Explaining "our own weird little

aberrational niche", Long points to the fact that "Americans like their comedy big and clowny and with a big smile on your face as you do it with the British, there has to be a little bit more of an element of self-awareness, of taking the piss as you do it". On tour in Lowestoft and Taunton, he has found the shows getting laughs he never expected. "When you come to these places as a guy who grew up in Hollywood, you just feel like you've come from another planet. Quaint little turns of phrase that are normal to you get a big laugh."

Still, isn't there a risk of the joke wearing thin: how many abridge-

ments, after all, can the theatre withstand? "It's more a case of whether we just get bored doing it," says Long. Having contributed material to radio (*The Reduced Shakespeare Radio Show* for BBC World Service) and to Channel 4 (*The Ring Reduced*, a condensation of Wagner's *Ring* cycle in collaboration with composer Michael Berkeley), the troupe is looking to expand into stage musicals, TV, perhaps film.

They are currently writing *The Complete Encyclopedia* (abridged) for London Weekend Television, a sketch comedy series in which, says Martin, "we explain all knowledge

in weekly half-hour chunks". Plans are brewing for the company's first musical, *The Complete Millennium* (abridged), which will feature an actual plot as well as an outside composer. "Stephen Sondheim saw the Shakespeare show in New York," says Martin. "Perhaps just for the hell of it, we should give him a call."

For the moment Martin's task, together with fellow players Matt Rippy and Austin Tichenor, is to bring to the stories of Abraham, Samson and Noah (among others) the same loony irreverence that has had audiences at the Shakespeare show chanting "Maybe, maybe

not" as they wave their arms above their heads. "I don't think we necessarily need to keep coming up with new shows," says Long. "Even if we never wrote anything else, our shelf-life could be these three shows. If I ended up just doing the Shakespeare show until I was 80, I would still die a happy person. Anything else we do is just icing on the cake."

● *The Bible: The Complete Word of God* (abridged) previews from Friday at the Gielgud (0171-694 5069). *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (abridged) and *The Complete History of America* (abridged) continue at the Criterion (0171-369 1747).

Macbeth as a regular assegai

Shakespeare is African! So said Welcome Msomi, the creator of this rousing version of *Macbeth*, on opening night; and nobody in the audience looked inclined to argue with him, still less with the warriors stamping in agreement behind him. His Johannesburg Civic Theatre company had put more energy into a curtain call than some put into *Macbeth* itself — and that, surely, is the way Shakespeare would have wished it.

Unabashedly transposes Macbeth from the land of withered hags, dirks and kilts to that of dancing sorceresses with beaded hair and leopard-skin robes. This is 19th-century Zululand, home of Thabani Tshanimi's Mabatha, who is pushed by his wife, Dieket-

seng Mnisi's Kamadonsela, into murdering Daggane, in Lawrence Masondo's performance the nation's towering, genial chieftain. The invasion that unseats him comes from Swaziland, not England, but in key respects the story is the familiar one.

In other words, anyone who knows the original would have no trouble following events in Zululand, even without the surtitles sporadically flashing from their anachronistic positions on the Globe's balconies. From these we learn that Mabatha sees a spectral assegai, not a dagger, which explains why Tshanimi doesn't just grab at it, but leaps three feet in the air towards it. But I cannot confirm whether Mnisi

bids her breasts "with serpents' water", or Skumbuzo Nsele's drunken porter talks of a farmer who hanged himself after irrigating his land by urinating on it, as their counterparts did when Unabashed visited London in the 1970s.

Msomi evokes a world where magic, laughter and violence co-exist in what I'm tempted to call a Jacobean fashion. The large, bold emotions are similarly apt. Mnisi puts so much gleeful ferocity into her voice and gestures that, when she speaks about dashing out her baby's brains, you can imagine the tot bouncing off the floor. As for Tshanimi, he beams and swags with the joy of power and

when Banquo appears from the grave, his panic is extreme. In other words, the production proves well suited to a packed O per to the sky; and never more than when the cast is jumping, somersaulting, drumming its feet, banging shields and weapons, ritually keening, or doing whatever evokes a victory celebration or state funeral. The dancing is wonderful and, it seems, unstoppable. In Scotland, Banquo's ghost appears twice before it breaks up Macbeth's feast. Here, the party only shows signs of going off after he has stalked on three times. That says something both about Zululand civilisation and this exhilarating company.

BENEDICT NIGHTINGALE

BBC PROMS: Russians rule with bells and gong; plus a baffling premiere

Simple spirits

ESNO/LAZAREV
Albert Hall/Radio 3

THE Last Night of the Proms came early this year. On Sunday, Alexander Lazarev led the audience in a day-long — they needed little enough encouragement — to a Highland fling of an encore from the Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

Up to that point the programme had been solely, though inventively, Russian. Glinka was represented by the little-known Capriccio Brillante on the Jota Aragonesa (Spanish Overture No 1), Tchaikovsky by his symphonic fantasia *Francesca da Rimini*, and Giya Kancheli — not previously heard at a Prom — by his Symphony No 3 (UK premiere).

Kancheli may be a new name to the Proms, but the Georgian composer is already something of a cult hit among those who seek spiritual meaning in simplicity. The Third Symphony begins with a solo voice intoning a lamenting, folk-inspired melody — an idea that returns at intervals,

and which is implicit even when not sounded. The counter-tenor David James here had the difficult task, executed competently, of sounding these few notes in the void.

There is much use of bells, a gong and celestially sustained strings, all punctuated by loud brass and percussion outbursts. An atmosphere is undoubtedly conjured, and perhaps a certain spirituality, but ultimately this music doesn't go anywhere. Rather, as Schmitke once put it, one experiences "a period of endlessness that passes by like a cloud".

A "new simplicity" of a different kind is evident in Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No 2 in G minor. Where Kancheli's minimal gestures — conceived in the 1970s — have tapped a popular vein in recent years, Prokofiev was deliberately seeking a more ingratiating idiom for his Soviet public. Tassini Little, playing with supreme confidence in front of an audience that adores her, exuded sweetness in her lyrical phrasing and fingertip delicacy.

The orchestra and Lazarev, its new principal conductor, came into their own in the colourful Glinka overture and in Tchaikovsky's dourly passionate portrayal of forbidden love.

BARRY MILLINGTON

Encore, maestro

ESNO/LAZAREV
Albert Hall/Radio 3

IN A season producing some exciting Proms premieres, one of the most memorable will surely be Roger Reynolds's *The Red Act Arias*, a BBC commission unveiled on Monday. It will probably also remain one of the most baffling, but its massive, 45-minute span ruled out the possibility of a helpful repeat performance.

Indeed, it was only towards its well-worked-out conclusion that the score's time-scale became clear: on its own, the opening movement sounded dense and unwieldy. Reynolds, an American avant-gardist new to the Proms; is not an "easy" composer. As before someone who studied physics, his works are technically innovative, and in *The Red Act Arias* he continues to use computers to find new sounds and new emotions in familiar musical material.

Beneath its formidable complexities, *The Red Act Arias* is a quasi-dramatic work of deep emotion: with Euripides and

Aeschylus texts that recall the explosive relationship of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, it could hardly be anything else. Each of the three movements, or "arias", is preceded by spoken narration (Harriet Walter); but it is the choir (the indomitable BBC Singers) that carries the burden, often singing as one voice in the manner of a Greek chorus. They have a lot to contend with from a large orchestra and computer-mixed sounds; co-ordination between mixing table and orchestra may not have been totally precise, but Leonard Slatkin shaped a strong, confident performance.

The piece was written with the Albert Hall in mind, and loudspeakers encircled the arena so that electronic effects "travelled" around the space. Although some of the rumblings and guttural growling seemed stuck in the 1970s, there were many haunting moments in the second and third movements, with washes of dreamlike sound and colling solos evoking desolation and hopelessness.

Reynolds shared the programme with Mahler's *Blumine*. Slatkin was compelling in both works, and if the BBC Symphony Orchestra had not apparently been suffering from an early case of Proms fatigue, the results might have been overwhelming.

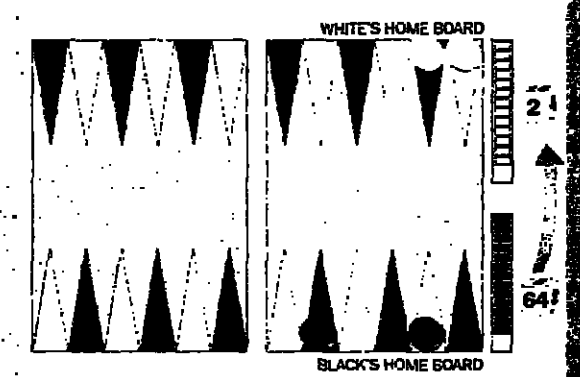
JOHN ALLISON

THE TIMES CHALLENGE OF THE MIND

£500 BACKGAMMON PROBLEM by Paul Lamford

Today's puzzle is based on Backgammon, which is derived from the ancient race games such as Senet or Tau. A Tau board was discovered in the royal Tombs of Ur dating from about 3,000 BC. The modern game dates from about 1700 and the introduction of the doubling dice in the US in the 1930s increased the level of skill substantially. In Britain about 20 million households have a board. The object of the game is to move all your checkers around the board and then take them off, always moving according to the rolls of the dice. Two dice are rolled per turn and the main strategy is to block your opponents' checkers because they may not move onto a point occupied by two or more enemy checkers. The other important rule is that if a solitary checker is landed on by an opposing checker, it is sent to the bar and must start its journey again.

The final stages of a game of backgammon are in progress in the diagram. White is moving clockwise and Black is moving anticlockwise and the home boards, from which the players bear off, are marked. Black is on roll and is contemplating making the first doubling of the game by turning the dice to 2 thereby doubling the stakes (the dice traditionally starts with the face showing 64 upmost). To win, Black will have to bear off his last two men with the next roll; if he does not, White is certain to win next turn whatever he rolls. Black needs to calculate. There are 36 possible different rolls of the two dice; if more than 18 of them win for him he should double; if less than 18 win he is an underdog and should not double. How many winning rolls does Black have?



a) 12 winning rolls
b) 19 winning rolls
c) 23 winning rolls
Call 0891 102 724 (ex UK +44 900 200 619) before midnight tonight with your answer, a, b, or c. The winner will get £500. Three runners-up will get a £50 voucher, donated by Hamleys, for use in its Regent Street or Covent Garden, London, stores. Winners will be chosen at random from all correct entries received and the answer will be published on Friday. Normal TNL competition rules apply.

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TEN MINUTE MENSA PROBLEM

Q1. What number is missing?

Q2. What numbers are missing from these sequences?

Q3. What number is missing from the last below?

There's £100 to be won today with this ten-minute Mensa teaser. The winner will be chosen at random from all correct entries received by midnight tonight. Call 0891 102 725 (ex UK +44 900 200 619). 0891 calls cost 50p per minute.

All readers who get two or three of today's Mensa puzzles correct will receive a certificate and a Mensa information pack which includes a home IQ assessment test. "Paul Lamford is a former editor of *Games and Puzzles* magazine and is currently commissioning editor of chess and bridge for Batsford Books.

DAY 1 (MONDAY) SOLUTIONS.

Scrabble UNDERLAY for 39 points (double-letter score and triple-word score for 39 points plus 50 points for using all seven letters). D Weaver of Cowes, Isle of Wight, wins £300. Mensa Problem: 1a 83 — multiply the previous number by 3 and subtract 4 (29x3 minus 4 is 83). 1b 122 — multiply the previous number by 2 and add 6 (58x2 plus 6 is 122). 2 Racing, Arcing, Caring. 3 Two possible answers: a) 4 — right hand x left foot (84) minus left hand x right foot (80) OR b) 132 — 1st drawing: (6x9) minus (11-9) is 51. Second drawing: (20x7) minus (12-4) is 132. G Ploverman of Wellingborough, Northants, wins £100.

TOMORROW: PLAY GO FOR THE CHANCE TO WIN MORE PRIZES

Alan Coren



I could have been a smouldering young blade, but it's been too much of a fag

I could not have ignited my shirt at a more propitious time. Especially as it was a glamorous shirt, with a fashionable little horse embroidered on it. And if a bonus were needed, I could have asked for nothing better than the double-header whereby, when the fire started, I was sitting, wearing my glamorous sunglasses, in my glamorous red convertible.

I was wearing my sunglasses, mind, not primarily, to look glamorous. I was wearing them because the convertible's hood was gloriously down, and under these circumstances, sparks from the cigarette which added a foy grace-note to this glamorous symphony could have been whipped into my eyes by the wind, whereupon all this glamour would have brought me the stardom it deserved: I should have got my big break on the evening news, as a sheeted corpse on the grass verge of the A41.

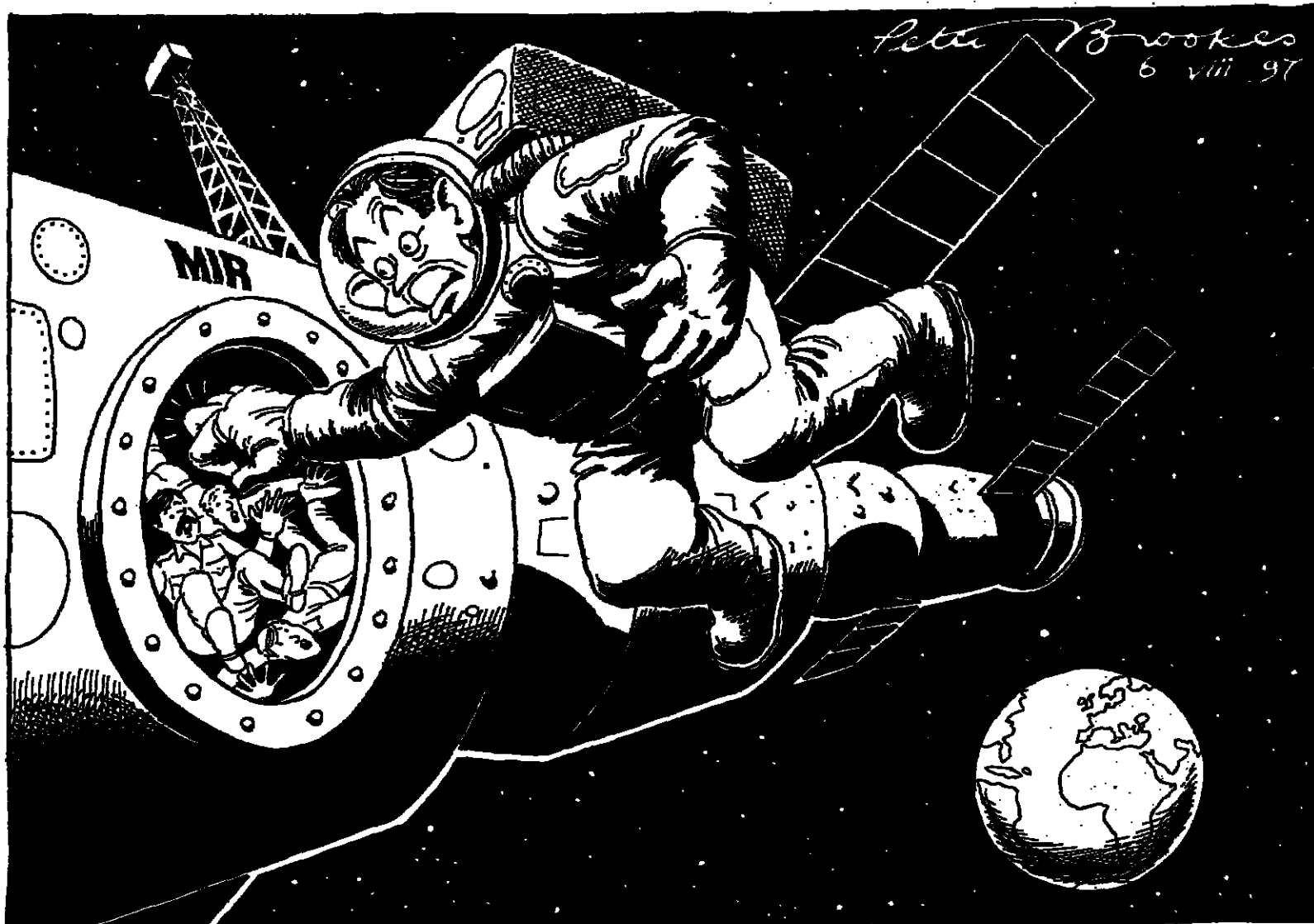
So the sparks did not blow into my eyes. They blew onto my shirt. I did not realise this until I got out at the rendezvous for which all this glamour had been punctiliously coordinated and adjusted my glamorous spotted silk tie in the rear-view mirror. I found not only that my shirt had half a dozen charred holes in it, but also that the pattern on the spotted silk tie had become irregular. Which left me, as I slid into lunch behind the glamorous panama held over my chest, with a lot of unglamorously sheepish explaining to do.

Why on earth, you cry, does he call this time propitious? I do so because the fire occurred last Saturday, and on the very next day the newspapers were packed to the gunwales with complaints by the Health Education Authority that style magazines were promoting tobacco as a top accessory. "Showing role models with cigarettes in poses that look cool," it cried, "reinforces the message that smoking is glamorous." The HEA was going spare, it was chewing the end of its tether, it had no idea what to do to buck this appalling trend. It did not know — until today — that it had to do was ask.

Because there is nobody more qualified than I to *metemorph* an HEA counterblast targeted on the unglamorously dressed cigarettes. Thirty times a day for the past 40 years, ie, on some 440,000 occasions, I have run the risk of those humiliating blows to *amour propre* that only the serious smoker experiences. I have dined with the utterly unglamorous, and I have in consequence sunk so often to the lowest depths of the uncivil as to have accumulated a range of situation, plot, character, and moral pay-off fit to keep regiments of HEA propagandists scribbling round the clock to adapt the stuff into posters, jingles, films, slogans, and any other outlet aimed at discouraging the weed.

Take, for example, this engaging billboard showing a young blade smirking seductively as he passes to a lissome girl the fag he has just lit for her: is his smirker not somewhat *marred* by the trickle of blood beneath it, which matches the stain on the fag that had so unfortunately stuck to his lip? How about this little film of a cool dude in a Ferrari, turning at traffic lights to ogle the svelte driver in the car beside him? Why is he now frantically grabbing at his groin? Because his cigar was long and his window was shut, and the snapped-off end has fallen between his legs and is currently burrowing hotly into the white hide of man and car alike. The cool dude has become an uncivil dud. As has, oh look, this briefly more successful Lothario, lighting his macho Zippo in the post-coital darkness beside a non-smoker whose pillowed tresses suddenly go up in flames. Lucky there is Krug to hand to douse her? Sadly no, for in grabbing frantically at the magnum, that hand will knock her bedside radio to the floor, alerting the landlady beneath, a martinet so averse to nookie as to have framed the lease in such a way that in the closing shot the glamorous couple are seen *huddled naked in the sleet*, waiting for their chud Armani threads to start flying out of the window.

I'm rather surprised that, given all this, New Tony has not already addressed it for who must shudder more than he at smoking's gravest risk? May day now, I expect to see every packet carrying a government warning that smoking can seriously damage your glamour.



"HAVE YOU GOT ROOM FOR ONE MORE... PLEASE?"

The bards of the byrger

Much of the National Eisteddfod may be laughably bogus — but it is still an occasion with significant cultural clout

The scene is from Walter Mitty. A man sitting in a marquee in a damp North Wales field hears his name called out in Welsh. A spotlight picks out Cei Williams, an academic from Anglesey, who stands up looking bemused. Suddenly an Arch-Druid dressed like a Pope descends on him carrying a wand and attended by acolytes. Mr Williams is draped in a purple gown and transported to the stage. There he is set upon a throne and is crowned with a silver crown. Girls with flowers in their hair dance before him, celestial harps play behind and a maiden presents him with the fabled Horn of Hirlas. An ode is sung in his honour.

Then the Arch-Druid raises a vast sword over Mr Williams' head and cries: "Aes heddwch?" (Is there peace?) "Heddwch!" shouts the audience. For a moment all talk of a Welsh referendum ceases. There is peace. For this, so far, is Wales's only assembly. It is the National Eisteddfod, meeting this week in the heart of Welsh Wales in Bala. The significant is never far removed from the absurd.

The tribal ceremonies of the peoples of the British Isles are bewilderingly vulgar. I once attended a banquet in London which was interrupted by Scots pipers marching round the tables, going full blast in bearskins and kilts. An Italian next to me assumed it was a terrifying student prank. When I reassured him he replied: "But I thought our Julius Caesar had helped you wipe out these people." As for the English, any function involving the House of Lords, the Anglican Church or Oxford University can reduce the irreverent to uncontrollable giggles.

The Welsh Eisteddfod takes the palm. It is a Booker Prize ceremony set in Stonehenge with a cast from *Die Meistersinger*. The eisteddfod itself is extremely ancient, dating from 1176 and probably the oldest arts festival in Europe. The institution at its heart, however, the Gorsedd, originated as a Welsh branch of the Ancient Order of Druids. These are complete phoneyes, founded in 1717 in London. Not until the 19th century did the druidical fiction come to the eisteddfod. How Welsh culture was hijacked by this freemasonry of ministers, teachers and librarians in capes and white boots is a mystery.

For all that, the eisteddfod is impressive. Of the half million Welsh people fluent in the native language, a fifth may

visit the festival during the week. I find it eerie to wander round a packed site in the midst of Great Britain and be surrounded by people speaking a language of which I know virtually nothing. Since 1937 the eisteddfod has refused to permit a word of English at the festival or its fringe. This year they even banned Wales's foremost rock band, Gorke, who refused to sing only in Welsh. Even fast-food stalls must make up such pseudo-Welsh names as "byrger". Nor is there a decent bookstall, as if nothing in English had ever advanced the Welsh cause and as if Dylan Thomas and R.S. Thomas never existed. Yet despite this

the eisteddfod is, of course, political. Its politics are that of language. As elsewhere in Europe, language is a proxy for group identity and a means for excluding outsiders. The eisteddfod is a platform for the Welsh Language Society, a front for Plaid Cymru, itself founded at an eisteddfod in 1925. The Gorsedd had long led the forward charge to get English taxes to support the Welsh language. In 1967 equal status was granted on forms and signs. In 1982 a television channel was devoted to Welsh, conceded like most Tory gestures only after threats of violence and a hunger strike from the Welsh Nationalist leader, Gwynfor Evans.

This is a synthetic success for Welsh culture, relying on massive positive discrimination. The survival of Welsh is in truth a gift of the English state. Anyone with a passable knowledge of Welsh can today get a job with the Government or the BBC. The number of children proficient in Welsh is even said to be rising. But withdrawal of the subsidies and Welsh would surely resume the downward slide it saw throughout this century, having lasted so long only through its identity with religious Nonconformity. It is one thing to support the study of a language as "heritage", another to force it on reluctant English-speaking Welsh at their considerable cost. Welsh Channel 4 is the world's most expensive minority channel.

This year, however, Welsh politics faces a different predicament: the determination of most of the Cardiff Establishment to have their new assembly. Next month's referendum has a mountain to climb to reverse the 80 per cent vote against such an assembly in 1979. The outcome is not a foregone conclusion. Unlike in Scotland or London, constitutional reform is not a matter of consensus in Wales. Not only are the Welsh Tories opposed, but so is

Simon Jenkins

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much of rural Wales and many Labour stalwarts, from Lord Tonypantry to Llew Smith.

The case remains evenly balanced. There is already a Welsh administration. There is a Welsh Office in Cardiff and a superstructure of 150 appointed quangos, some of them notoriously corrupt. There is a Welsh dimension for regional government distinct from England. That this government should lack democratic focus is ostensibly outrageous. Wales may not have been a constitutional nation, like Scotland. But it is a people. Across Europe, cultural and demographic continuity have been reason enough for self-rule.

Against this theory must be set the likely practice. Despite its detractors, the proposed Welsh assembly is not merely a talking shop. It would control more than £7 billion of resources, notably those flowing into economic development, education, health, the arts and local government. Sixty assembly members, with Labour strongly in the majority, would have discretion over huge amounts of money.

Wales is not a coherent political entity. The gulf between south and north is wide. The north is becoming Merseyside-on-Sea and much of central Wales is a home from home for the Midlands. The assembly will exacerbate existing divisions between north and south, English and Welsh, locals and newcomers. It will put at risk the cultural identity that has come, in small part, from the eisteddfod tradition. Worse, it could introduce politics into that identity, and raise unpleasant questions. What price a monoglot eisteddfod when an English-speaking assembly is doling out the subsidies?

The principle is clear: regions with a coherent sense of self should be free to choose devolved self-government. For Wales to need ministers, officials and subsidies ordained from London is humiliating. It is the nanny state gone geographical. If the Welsh want their assembly, they must be entitled to it, whether or not others think it in their best interest. But I have a premonition. The hard grafters of Cardiff will want things their way. They have long put the pork barrel and the planning permit before the odes of Branwen. They do not speak Welsh and prefer not to be reminded of the fact. Time may come when the jovial bards of Bala, leaders of a still significant British culture, will look back on 1997 as a blessed memory.

Spinning out of control

Bruce Anderson
on the hubris of
Peter Mandelson

If Peter Mandelson died today, he would already have achieved an immortality. He not only invented Tony Blair; he reinvented the Labour Party. Then he brought the two together. Over the past decade, no British politician has been more influential. Without Mr Mandelson there might have been a Labour Government, but it would have had neither a huge majority nor the vaulting hegemonic arrogance.

But as is apparent from the events of the past few days, Mr Mandelson is in danger of becoming a major obstacle to his own ambitions. He has a problem: he has the defects of his qualities. Peter Mandelson's principal assets are fear, distrust and ruthlessness. He is afraid of the Tories, the most formidable of all democratic parties, and capable of recovering from adversity. He distrusts Labour, whose internal divisions and unpopular policies have so often assisted the Tories. Finally, he is ruthless towards anyone who might stand in his way.

Mr Mandelson does not have an original mind. He has never displayed any interest in ideas; the book which he co-authored is as thinly argued as it is badly written. Some politicians enjoy mastering opponents in argument. Mr Mandelson would not be very good at that, so instead he bullies any potential opponent, especially on the electronic media. He and Alastair Campbell spent several years browbeating television journalists, especially from the BBC. Many of those whom they were bullying were, in fact, closet Labour supporters, which may explain their spineless response; Mr Mandelson had also taken the precaution of befriending the BBC's Director-General, John Birt: the BBC's hierarchy did often seem curiously reluctant to defend its journalists.

But even in sclerotic institutions afflicted by bias and timidity, bullying does build up resentments — as has become apparent over the past few days. In the *Newnight* studio the other evening, a recording was shown of Mr Mandelson straining for sincerity while insisting that a Labour Government would never be guilty of media manipulation. The studio erupted into laughter.

It was also a mistake of Mr Mandelson's to let it be known that he was in charge of the Government in the PM's absence. Not only will that irritate every Labour Cabinet minister — all notionally his seniors — it is also constitutionally dubious, given that he is not even a Privy Counsellor. Nor are the precedents encouraging.

In the early 1980s, there was a promising American politician called Alexander Haig. Then President Reagan was shot while Vice-President Bush was in mid-air. So Mr Haig announced that he was in charge; this only added to the general confusion. Mr Bush, who had made no announcement, arrived back in Washington, and took charge. Suddenly, Mr Haig looked silly. Shortly afterwards, Mr Haig was sacked.

Mr Mandelson is not about to be sacked. But he does not have many friends in the Labour Party, Tony Blair excepted. He has been too rude, too smug, too supercilious. Now that he is in a little trouble, there will be more laughter than sympathy — especially as the trouble was wholly unnecessary.

Labour failed to win a by-election in a formerly safe Tory seat. The party had gambled by sending in Mr Blair, and the gamble had not come off: so what? Robin Cook's marriage collapsed; there was the suicide of a Labour MP; against so what? There was no need for the Government to say anything.

But Mr Mandelson is used to operating on the basis of instant rebuttal. So the Royal Yacht suddenly became an issue, as did Chris Patten's conversations with Jonathan Dancy. The Government is lucky that the Commons is not sitting. Peter Mandelson has always tried to keep away from the dispatch box, but this time he would have been made to squirm.

Many political regimes have had their Mandelsons. But Napoleon never left Fouché in charge. Mr Mandelson now seems to be fed up with being the fourth murderer, always operating in the anonymity of the press gallery or over the phone to Broadcasting House, and he wants. He has earned the reward from Labour; unfortunately for Labour, he seems to want the reward to be the lightning.

It is a mistake. I first met Peter Mandelson when he was researcher on Brian Walden's *Weekend World*. He was a good researcher. Any information requested of him arrived on time in beautifully docketed cardboard files, just like the ones he now keeps on Labour MPs. In those days, he seemed to be content with a minor credit. That was wise of him.

Mr Blair once speculated as to whether he could ever persuade the Labour Party to love Peter Mandelson. From the very way he asked the question, the answer was implied: most unlikely. If there is no hope of persuading the Labour Party to take Mr Mandelson to its bosom, there is even less chance of inducing the British people to do so. But hitherto at least Mr Mandelson has been able to exert a covert compliance from Labour MPs, by fragmenting them as in the consequences of their should withhold it. That would never work with the British electorate.

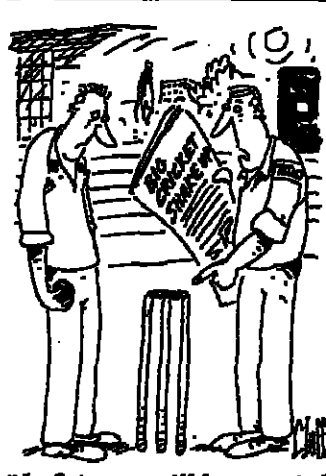
Blind faith

QUIET will descend on vicarage sitting-rooms next month to see how John Carey, 29, performs on the television programme *Blind Date*. Carey, a schoolteacher in London, is a nephew of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey.

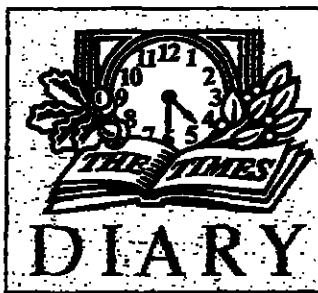
He was reeling around Fulham Road's bars on Saturday night, expansive, grinning and bragging of his selection for the show. He said he was lured into auditioning for the show by his former girlfriend (who also auditioned and will be on the programme in the coming months) and added he hoped the show would provide him with "a few laughs, respect from my mates for getting my face on the telly and hopefully a trip to Morocco".

Yesterday morning the bounce was still there. When the subject of his Uncle George, however, was brought up, he went cold. "No, I didn't have to ask my uncle's permission to go on the show," said Carey. "He's a pretty easygoing kind of guy." Later, he even telephoned back in an unsuccessful attempt to dispute any familial connection to the Archbishop, despite having just spoken of him quite openly.

The Archbishop was in Australia yesterday, preferring to express his disapproval of the Prince of Wales marrying Camilla Parker Bowles rather than of his nephew's decision to appear on a public dating show. Modesty overcame Carey Jr when we asked for a photograph. He was concerned a picture of him might prejudice the girls he will meet on set.



In future, you'll be expected to knock these bits of wood over with the ball



A worldwide dearth of old-fashioned political dictators is depressing John Simpson, Foreign News Editor of the BBC and outspoken critic of the BBC's Director-General, John Birt. "I adore them [dictators]," he tells the Radio Times this week. "The sad thing is they're becoming rarities. You have to visit weird parts of the world now to find them — like Television Centre and Broadcasting House."

New balls

COUNTRY ramblers have succeeded where a full-throated media had failed in forcing Michael Meacher, the Minister for the Environment, to abandon his plans to destroy a cove of trees beside his Gloucestershire home to make way for a tennis court. Meacher withdrew his applica-

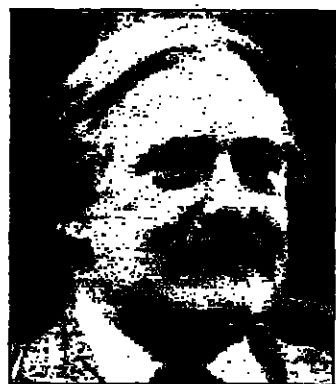
tion for planning permission, which was due to be considered by Cotswold District Council later this month, when he realised that a public footpath would cut directly through the court. "It would be very difficult for Mr Meacher if ramblers kept crossing his court during play, which they would have every right to do," said a spokeswoman at the council. "He has decided to put his case into abeyance."

All change

ADVANCED cufflink-fiddling has broken out in the Foreign Office over the appointment of Sir Robin Renwick as a Labour working peer. During the Eighties, Renwick was one of Margaret Thatcher's top foreign policy advisers.

He was despatched to be Our Man in Washington by John Major. Clipped of voice and smoother than an ambassadorial Rolls, he was seen as the ideal of a High Tory mandarin.

On his return in 1995, however, he surprised many by becoming one of Tony Blair's advisers on European policy. He claimed to like Blair's more Palmerstonian approach to foreign policy. "I admire his leadership qualities as I admired those of Margaret Thatcher," he said yesterday.



Shipmates: Cobham and his new wife, Dr Lisa Clayton

Now a director at Flemings, the merchant bank, he says: "I will not be taking a frontbench or foreign policy role. I have full-time business commitments."

All those years as a tongue-biting diplomat will serve him well under new Labour. A spokesman in the Labour Whips' Office in the Lords says: "He will be expected to restrict his criticisms to those expected of a Labour peer."

Quiet affair

LIFE as the man who lost his wife to David Mellor, the former Heritage Secretary, was never easy for Viscount Cobham. Happily, he has regrouped and last Friday he



remarried, this time to Dr Lisa Clayton, 38, who in 1995 became the first woman to sail around the world non-stop and unassisted.

Cobham divorced his wife, Renelope Lady Cobham, on the grounds of adultery after she made off with Mellor. The first he heard of the couple's affair was when Mellor made a public statement about it. Dr Clayton was married briefly when she was 19.

As befits the camera-shy viscount, yesterday's Court and Social page in *The Times* reported that their wedding took place "quietly at Hagley Hall". Cobham's West Midlands seat.

P.H.S.

John's in R2D



CHINESE WHISPERS

After a news-spin too far, the public should have the full facts

With great and deliberate assiduousness last Sunday, Peter Mandelson fanned a report that Chris Patten was suspected of leaking official documents to the journalist Jonathan Dimbleby. The resulting blaze ensured the story equal news billing with Robin Cook's marital troubles and those of the Labour Party in Scotland. First, the BBC was contacted by a "senior Labour source" and asked how it proposed to handle the story. The BBC, properly, pointed out that the Foreign Office had yet to confirm that the former Governor of Hong Kong was under official investigation. An unnamed "source close to senior Government figures" duly obliged and the Minister without Portfolio then personally made a statement on radio, spiced with dramatic reference to "secret intelligence material". Journalists were further briefed that M16 was involved.

The next day, the Foreign Office — whose responsibility any statement clearly was in the first place — was left to stuff the storm back into a teacup. This was, it said, only an internal inquiry into a leak. Mr Patten did not figure in it and there was no question of the police being involved. Mr Patten himself dismissed the allegation as "totally without foundation", which he believed had "now been conceded". He also voiced his disbelief that party political gain could possibly have motivated such a damaging slur, since that would be to cross the line from spin-doctoring to "spin-witchdoctoring".

That is precisely the impression left by this particular bit of news manipulation. It has the odour of an alliance of convenience between new Labour and the old China hands who were and are bitterly opposed to Mr Patten's handling of democratic reforms in Hong Kong. For Labour, this story helps to sideline bad news, while taking the shine off Mr Patten, who as a statesman held in high international repute would be a formidable opponent if he returned to the Commons. The former Governor's critics, under fire in the Dimbleby book on Mr Patten's governorship, share an interest in casting doubt on his integrity. Mr Dimbleby is caught in

the crossfire about possible leaks; but he does not look like the real target.

The Dimbleby book claims, and Mr Patten is said to believe, that British officials privately colluded with China in the 1980s to back away from the public commitment, made by Lord Howe as Foreign Secretary, to greater democracy in Hong Kong by 1988 — time enough for a new electoral system to be well entrenched before the 1997 handover. This is the grave substance — described by Lord Howe as "unjust accusations of treachery and foul play" — which has given rise to the inquiry into leaked official secrets.

A routine downplaying by the Foreign Office is plainly insufficient. Tony Blair should accept Paddy Ashdown's call for a full inquiry by the Foreign Affairs Select Committee to end the "speculation, innuendo and rumour" that will otherwise continue to damage Mr Patten. The British public should be told whether "intelligence material" was, as Mr Mandelson asserts, unlawfully disclosed, and by whom. The people of both Britain and Hong Kong have the right to know what really took place. The Government owes Mr Patten the opportunity to clear his name; and on the substance, his critics within the Conservative Party and the Foreign Office should also be enabled to disprove if they can the allegations against him in the Dimbleby book.

Nothing but good can now come of disclosure. The Government should undertake not only to release to the committee any evidence of official leaks, but to publish as a Blue Book the full record of Britain's negotiations with China from 1985 to 1988, the period to which these alleged leaks refer.

The previous Government set a precedent in 1990, when it responded to Chinese allegations that Britain had breached a secret agreement on the pace of constitutional reforms by publishing the relevant exchange of letters between Britain and China "to set the record straight". This Government, which is committed to a Freedom of Information Act and has championed that fact, can do no less.

SIMON'S SALE

Poor political management has extended this saga

The announcement by Lord Simon of Highbury, Minister for European Trade and Competitiveness, that he intends to sell his stake in British Petroleum "as soon as arrangements can be finalised" is to be welcomed. His further statement that he would donate to charity any additional returns that those shares might have made since he became a Minister is an act of some generosity. Lord Simon's personal probity never been brought into question. His efforts to explain himself now are entirely apt if unfortunately somewhat belated.

This matter has acquired momentum more from decisions made by Downing Street than the efforts of John Redwood, Shadow Trade and Industry Secretary. Tony Blair clearly wanted to recruit a high-profile businessman to his administration. But that enthusiasm appears to have led to a certain carelessness in the detailed organisation of Lord Simon's arrangements. Over the past three months the internal contradictions in the Government's stand on this subject have been exposed in parliamentary answers.

The argument has persisted because the Government refused to acknowledge that the Minister's continued control of a stake of this size in a company of this character did risk at least the impression of a conflict of interest. Nor would it concede that Lord Simon's quite proper need to absent himself from departmental matters that might affect BP constituted an impediment on his effectiveness. Instead Downing Street decided on an unnecessarily aggressive line of approach on the issue. A week ago Mr Blair told William Hague to "grow up" when he raised this issue with the Prime Minister. It now seems that he or his associates have urged Lord Simon to sell up.

There were reasons related to Lord Simon's knowledge of BP that could have been cited in his defence. He outlined his dilemma — particularly in regard to insider dealing legislation — in the columns of this newspaper. This was not an implausible case although it understated the importance of appearances in ministerial matters. Had it been articulated earlier, Lord Simon's concerns would have attracted more sympathy. It only emerged after the Government reluctantly realised that its own prior preaching on proper practice in public life could not be reconciled with this situation.

Lord Simon's statement deals with almost all the issues of importance related to his finances. The small personal holdings in companies such as Grand Metropolitan that he held outside of his blind trust now appear to be in due administrative order. There remains some concern about whether his former position at BP will inhibit his official duties. In his article for *The Times* Lord Simon noted that his status as an ex-Chairman of that company — regardless of any shares he might possess — would make it improper for him to involve himself in decisions related to his old employer.

If that view were to be followed with too much vigilance then Lord Simon's capacities as a Minister might again be cause for comment. If not he should be able to return to his desk with both honour and effectiveness in appropriate condition. It should not be impossible for businessmen to make the move to Whitehall. The transfer of experience has much to commend it. Lord Simon has foregone a salary of £874,000 to be at Mr Blair and Britain's service. It is to be hoped that he receives rather better advice from the professional politicians in future.

A BETTER GAME

English cricket needs an urgent shake-up

Lord MacLaurin of Knebworth, English cricket's "doctor", yesterday unveiled his new prescriptions for the diseases that afflict the game. His efforts will not please everyone: some will see them as too radical, while others, ourselves included, will regard them as not radical enough. Yet to criticise him for failing to be a true revolutionary would not only be childish but also unhelpful.

No one should doubt that Lord MacLaurin, the chairman of the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), hopes sincerely to shake up English cricket. He can still do so, in his next round of reforms. By the same token, no one should underestimate the gravity of the problems with which he has had to grapple. English cricket is flabby. It is overweight. It is uncompetitive. It is often dull and jejune, dozy and joyless. There is simply too much of it as well: season after season, men we refer to as "seasoned pros" play a ceaseless stream of county matches. If it's Tuesday it must be Weston-super-Mare. Professional cricket has been reduced to just another day at the "office".

We regret that Lord MacLaurin did not opt for a two-tiered County Championship, with competitiveness injected into the jaded matches by the incentive of promotion and

divisions — is at least an improvement on the present position. Our cricketers need to play fewer matches against fewer teams, and the proposed reform will at least make sure of that. Our championships need to be leaner and meaner, with players hungry to perform on the occasions they get to play. This ensures that they are mentally "match fit" at all times, not merely men going through the white-flannelled motions.

It is no accident that the three most competitive Test sides — Australia, the West Indies and Pakistan — emerge from short, sharp domestic seasons. It is no accident either that the least competitive of the major Test-playing countries — England and India — have very long seasons and a plethora of teams competing against each other. Quantity kills aggression. A surfeit kills hunger.

There is no guarantee, of course, that such structural change will make for a winning England side. Success at cricket, as in any other sport, boils down eventually to a question of talent. That is a commodity that even Lord MacLaurin cannot conjure up on our playing fields. What he has begun to do, however, and what he must continue to do, is to search for a structure that does not throttle the talent that we do have. His

No 10's control of errant ministers

From Mr Joe Haines

Sir, There is nothing new and nothing wrong in Downing Street's control of newspaper and broadcasting interviews. I operated the same system more than 25 years ago with Harold Wilson, and had my Conservative successors done the same they would have avoided many of the banana skins which contributed to their final skid from office.

Wilson's dictum was that editors had a newspaper (or programme) to bring out every night and that he had a government to be elected every five years. Their priorities were not the same. As press secretary to the leader of a relentlessly fissiparous party it made sense to ensure that all members of his Government were singing from the same hymn sheet. That entailed a central (Downing Street) oversight and control where necessary, which was delegated by Wilson to me.

Of course, ministers didn't like it, nor did the press. At Wilson's resignation dinner in Downing Street, Tony Benn gently attacked me for operating the policy. Eric Heffer once threatened to come to Downing Street to demand from the Prime Minister the right to appear in a debate with a Tory MP on the middle classes (!) and only desisted when I told him the policeman at the door would be instructed to refuse him entrance. Another Minister was in tears when he was denied the right to attack a Cabinet colleague (Benn) in a public speech.

Nor were ministers allowed to comment publicly on matters which were the concern of other departments. When Reg Prentice, as Education Secretary, wanted to discuss economic matters on TV with Peter Jay, I said "No" (Prentice disagreed with the Government's income policy and, in any case, Jay would have wiped the floor with him) and was criticised at the front of the programme for doing so.

Those decisions were not about open or shut government but about coherent government. I can't imagine an editor allowing his leader-writer publicly to go against his paper's policy and nor should a Prime Minister give that latitude to a colleague.

Yours faithfully,
JOE HAINES
(Chief Press Secretary to the Prime Minister, 1969-70 and 1974-76; to the Leader of the Opposition, 1970-74),
1 South Fife,
London Road, Southborough,
Tumbridge Wells, Kent.
August 3.

Tory wets

From Sir Julian Critchley

Sir, God save the Tory party from its press and publicity officers. The photograph (later editions, August 5) of William Hague, wearing a baseball cap with his name on it (and the slogan "a fresh future" on the back), and another photograph of him coming down a water chute at Flambards in Cornwall (earlier editions), were undignified in the extreme.

Our new leader, elected by 92 votes, is to face the Tory party at this October's party conference in Blackpool. In Cornwall he looked all of 15 years old. Will he be permitted to act his age on Lancashire's big dipper?

Yours etc.
JULIAN CRITCHLEY,
19 Broad Street,
Ludlow, Shropshire.
August 5.

Hand on the tiller

From Mr Barry Ramsay

Sir, I was amused by your lead headline today, "Mandelson accused of fixing news", and look forward to further examples in similar vein: "Doctors accused of treating illness" perhaps?

Yours faithfully,
BARRY RAMSAY,
119 Studdland Road, W7.
August 5.

Labour and unions

From Mr Jack Shapiro

Sir, It is an ironic fact that the Labour Party, stemming as it does from the original Labour Representation Committee which obtained the election of Keir Hardie as the first Labour MP, is now nearly a century old.

At that time the trade unions were disaffiliated with the Liberal Party representing the interests of trade unionists. Now the trade unionists are being edged out of the new Labour Party and the Liberals and many businessmen are being welcomed in.

Your editorial of July 31, "Better led than red", is right to suggest that "most voters prefer to have a centre-left party which is as comfortable with business as with organised labour". This centre left is about those people who have achieved a middle-class status under Thatcher and Major. They rarely belong to trade unions and certainly new Labour does not represent the underclass that is getting poorer whilst those centre-left voters are getting richer.

Then who is to represent the interests of the underclass and the edged-out trade unionists?

Yours sincerely,
JACK SHAPIRO.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

'Duplicity' an issue in government

From Mr I. D. Cleland

Sir, The Foreign Secretary, while he was Shadow, sought to criticise — rightly, in my judgment — the previous Administration for its double standards and what he in effect called its duplicity over a range of issues. In office himself he has — rightly in my judgment — sought to occupy the high moral ground on arms sales, human rights and a whole range of issues. Is he not now fatally flawed in his capacity to take this stance simply because he seems in his private life to have practised duplicity to those nearest and dearest to him (report, August 4)?

Is not the real tragedy that we may have to lose the services of an able and gifted man because you cannot separate private and public matters in the way the Prime Minister has tried to do in his expressions of support for his beleaguered colleague? Is not the hypocrisy of the use by the Labour Party in Uxbridge of the Parkinson affair now exposed as utter folly as well as hypocrisy?

Yours sincerely,
DAVID CLELAND,
Celston, Rhosom Road,
Halkyn, Holywell, Flintshire.

From Sir Robert Rhodes James

Sir, I cannot help vaguely wondering how our earnest and moralistic press would have treated a Conservative Foreign Secretary who had ditched his wife of 28 years for his secretary, a senior Conservative minister who hung on to shares worth over £2 million, some in a Channel Islands tax-avoidance trust, and a Conservative MP perhaps driven to suicide by the machinations of his colleagues.

Also, how would the media have regarded a Conservative prime minister who, amid this mayhem, went on holiday with his family to a Tuscan mansion owned by a multi-millionaire Conservative MP whom he had just appointed to a senior position in his Government?

Just wondering.
Yours etc.
ROBERT RHODES JAMES
(Conservative MP for
Cambridge, 1976-92),
The Stone House, Great Gransden,
Sandy, Bedfordshire.
August 5.

PoW campaign for financial justice

From Brigadier E. G. B. Davies-Scourfield (ret'd)

Sir, I would not wish people to think that all ex-PoWs feel as your correspondents in today's *Times*.

Once captured we were of little further use to our country, and many of us felt grateful (and indeed rather surprised) that we were paid anything at all. After all, our keep (such as it was) was free, and the British Red Cross, thanks to its generous supporters and voluntary workers (most of whom were unpaid), sent us huge numbers of parcels (for which we were not charged).

Many ex-PoWs like myself feel embarrassed by the attempts made by some of our fellow prisoners and some PoW organisations to squeeze more money out of our Government, instead of showing some gratitude for all that was done on our behalf.

Ex-PoWs of the Japanese are, of course, in a different situation.
Yours sincerely,
GRIS DAVIES-SCOURFIELD
(PoW, Germany, 1940-45),
Old Rectory Cottage,
Medstead, Alton, Hampshire.
August 1.

From Group Captain Alec Ingle

Sir, As one involved for the last 17 years in the campaign for financial justice to prisoners-of-war held in German prison camps, it was my belief that the Germans should have been repaid at the end of hostilities for any payments they made to us whilst we were in their hands, in accordance with the 1929 Geneva Convention.

Norfolk war archive

From Mr C. Berry Savory

Sir, In reply to the excellent letter from the Director-General of the Imperial War Museum (July 30) in respect of the archives held here, I should emphasise that the real purpose of having the RFC Northborough photographs here was that Northborough was the largest Royal Flying Corps base in Norfolk in the First World War. We thought it right to keep this record in the county.

The "open viewing" referred to by Commander Roger Paine, RN, in his accompanying letter, refers to what has been our policy since our foundation in 1988. The public can touch and feel all our heavy exhibits and we have in the holiday season "live" tank demonstrations twice daily, when the public can ride in certain vehicles.

Yours sincerely,
C. BERRY SAVORY
(Managing partner),
The Muckleburgh Collection,
Weybourne Military Camp,
Weybourne, Holt, Norfolk.
August 1.

Letters should carry a daytime telephone number. They may be sent to the Editor, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN.

Fate of classical music publishers

From Mr Andrew King

Sir, Many of us who work in the music publishing industry will be both amazed and irritated by the letter (July 30) from various parties with an interest in the future of Boosey and Hawkes.

Are they not aware that the "pop" publishers of whom they write so disparagingly have perfectly properly and for many years supported the publishers of "serious music" via a system of cross-subsidy operated by the Performing Rights Society.

Mr Donald Mitchell and his co-signatories are so used to being treated as a special case that they have lost touch with the outside world, where, for instance, songs like the Beatles' catalogue (for many an equally important part of musical history) have been bought and sold more often than a washing machine in Arthur Daley's warehouse.

If they consider themselves such proud curators of a cultural treasure trove, why did they not take steps many years ago to protect their copyrights contractually from treatment of which they did not approve?

Yours faithfully,
ANDREW KING
(Head of Publishing),
Mute Song,
429 Harrow Road, W10,
August 1.

From Lord Menuhin, OM

Sir, The problem of Boosey and Hawkes, which represents a very great British musical tradition, is that we have confused the free market of business with the autonomy of cultures. Without an awareness, a conscience, that we must each and all carry for a common cultural heritage, it is today perfectly conceivable for Boosey and Hawkes to be sold — hypothetically speaking — to a Japanese garbage firm for good business reasons.

I am convinced that without a respect for, and official representations of, cultural units, we will see this happening more often, to our great misfortune and to the misfortune of our cultural life the world over — particularly in those fields which straddle the cultural and the commercial.

Yours sincerely,
YEHUDI MENUHIN,
Sym Music Company Limited,
PO Box 6160, London SW1W 9XJ.
August 4.

Low blow

From Colonel Patrick Montgomery

Sir, Mr Chapman Pincher (letter, July 30) evidently bases his assessment of the quality of game birds on the height at which they fly.

In the Fifties I was in Portugal and was invited to shoot partridges on an estate in the Alentejo region. The birds were plentiful in the cork forests where the boughs came down to head height.

No one could say of these partridges that they lacked the quality either of courage or of tactical skill. Observing the advancing line of guns and waiting till the last moment, each covey would rise and fly at head height straight down the line of guns. Several of the guns lacked experience, so anyone failing to throw himself to the ground was at risk.

Our host had reason to revise the guest list for his next shoot, as a short halt was called for one of us to relieve him, with his penknife, of half a dozen or so shot.

Yours sincerely,
PATRICK MONTGOMERY,
The Oast House,
Framfield Road, Buxted, East Sussex.
August 1.

The Avebury Four

From Mrs Susan Hopkin

Sir, Perhaps the four peacocks at Avebury (report, August 1) are being aggressive and causing so much damage because the National Trust is not feeding them properly.

A friend of mine, who has a beautiful garden, has some peacocks which arrived uninvited a few years ago. They found it so delightful they stayed and have bred. The birds never touch anything in the garden because they are so well fed. However, it is very expensive, my friend tells me it costs approximately £50 every ten days for six peacocks.

They put on a wonderful show in front of the house every evening, which adds great charm to the property.

Yours sincerely,
SUSAN HOPKIN,
Chesham House,
30-31 Chesham Place, SW1.
August 4.

Love's labours lost?

From Mr Alastair Aked

Sir, The Government, in launching its "sexual awareness week" (report, August 4), is aiming it at everyone from 16 to 70, which excludes me. Fortunately I have a younger wife, so I will have to listen to her, mutely and happily, all week.

Yours faithfully,
ALASTAIR AKED,
16 Mayfair, 74 West Cliff Road,
Bournemouth, Dorset.

As its rivals scramble, ITV looks ahead with optimism

Oasis of calm among the shifting sands

What did Adam say to Eve as they left the Garden of Eden? "We live in an age of transition." This useful public platform joke does not explain why some transitions are so much easier than others.

The BBC is in a state of permanent revolution. Those Radio 4 changes? Not dumbering down, but tidier packaging, which will bear watching for the same effect. And Channel 4 is not having a smooth passage from the Michael Grade to the Michael Jackson administration. The time of the "body bags" is said to be over, but as these contain several who gave their hearts and souls to Channel 4, the shock will take time to fade. What's more, Channel 4 needs a replacement for the excellent Sir Michael Bishop, departing under a political change of climate.

The supposedly cutthroat commercial world of ITV seems a haven of peace in comparison. The current holders of franchises are now assured of gliding into the next century with secure tenure and possibly lower rent. Thanks to the Independent Television Commission, their regulator, the 14 ITV companies and GMTV, which holds the national breakfast slot, will not have to gamble at auction for the right to stay on the air for another ten years. Instead, they can apply for renewal as much as four years in advance of their licence's expiry date, 2002. That's like renewing a library book well ahead of time so that you can enjoy it.

Of course, there are conditions attached. The ITV companies must behave themselves. They must keep their programme promises. And they must pay the price that the ITC sets to stay where they are. But the new formula is reasonable, and will eliminate the grotesque variations the 1990 Thatcherite auction produced. Those who desperately overbid to secure their licence now are expected to lead the pack for earlier renewal.

In the draft renewal procedures, the ITC has come up with nothing that was not allowed for in the 1990 Broadcasting Act, provisions for quietly modifying the savagery of the auction having been tucked into the small print. Yet the ITC's interpretation of the rules has been imaginative and open. Public comments are invited, submissions will, unless secrecy is requested, be made public and modifications will be incorporated. How very different from the take-it-or-leave-it BBC.

The striking feature of the view from the top of ITV is that its regulators like what they see. The ITC observes no need for structural alteration either to the shape of the ITV regions or the allocation of broadcasting

hours. "Viewers are broadly happy," says the ITC.

The major reform will come in the way the ITV companies reimburse the Treasury for the privilege of exploiting a national resource, the airwaves. The proposal for reform acknowledges two facts. One is that the anomalies of the 1990 auction were of no service to the viewer. Yorkshire Television bid nearly £38 million a year, while richer Central, so strong it has had no rival bidders, got away with a derisory £2,000 a year. The corollary is that Michael Grade did not need as well as Channel 4 a favour when he vociferously argued that any money unnecessarily taken out of a television channel could be better spent on programmes. Recently ITV leaders have been heard arguing for getting "our money back" just as Mr Grade did.

Some of ITV's companies will now see their payments reduced. The ITC itself will set a price for each licence based on its estimate of the current market value. Then it will require an additional extra payment based on a certain share of each company's advertising revenue. This second variable will be given more weight than recognition of the fact that filling television air time is a risky business and likely to become more so. The air of calm and sweet reason at the ITC stems in part from the relative simplicity of its mandate. Prickly questions of schedule and staff morale are the worries of the component companies, not the regulator. But the ITC has also benefited from a smooth transition from one regime to another. Sir Robin Biggam, as chairman and Peter Rodgers, as chief executive, have taken over from Sir George Russell and David Glencross with none of the Year Zero drama that too often accompanies a change of institutional command.

As a result, ITV, for all its sliding, ageing audiences, has a clear view of its future. The business of ITV is business, and possibly the new ITC leaders are even more sympathetic to that idea. One sign is big "un's" willingness to think the unthinkable and allow ITV to move the News at Ten. With news bursting out all over television — and movies too — it does seem a bit hard-headed for the ITC to insist that every weekday's ideal film time on ITV should be broken by a half-hour-worthy non-fiction.

If the News at Ten should shift, can Channel 4's leisurely 7 o'clock news from ITN survive at 50 minutes? With 30 minutes about to become Radio 4's preferred length, the ruminate, essay-filled news bulletin looks like an endangered species.



BRENDA MADDOX

The Client's Story



The naked model can't help expressing his enthusiasm for the art student's scent

● IMPULSE BODY SPRAY

THE CLIENT: Grazia Calza, 27, European Innovation Manager, Impulse, Elida Fabergé.

WHAT OTHER CAMPAIGNS HAVE YOU BOUGHT? I am from Brazil. The only ads in this country have been the launch of ID fragrance (different women floating between bar code lines) and Car Crust for Impulse.

THE AGENCY: Ogilvy & Mather.

WHAT'S THE PLOT? A student is late for her art class. As she rushes by the model, he captures her scent. Something starts to happen to him and the whole class starts to laugh. She is the last to notice what has happened. He was having a — how can I put it? — natural, physical reaction.

WHAT'S THE STRATEGY? As always, that a man can't help acting on impulse. But we wanted to change the exceptional device in a challenging, innovative way.

WAS IT EXPENSIVE? It cost half a million pounds. I don't think that was cheap but I think it was good value for what it was.

AT WHOM IS IT AIMED? Our target audience is 16 to 22-year-olds. Girls who are looking for a good quality fragrance that is also fun and witty. Quite stylish, if you like.

ANY CENSORSHIP PROBLEMS? The ITC ruled that we made different versions according to the age of the audience. There is a version where the

pack stands up at the end which can be seen on TV all over Europe. This country is the only one where they have these restrictions.

WHAT WERE YOU LOOKING FOR IN THE MAN? Not the macho type. Quite sensitive. Not only worried about the body but also the emotions. Not a bimbo.

AND THE GIRL? We want girls to look at her and say: "She's like one of my friends." Not threatening.

WAS HE REALLY NAKED? No. But once, for a particular shot, he had to remove the pouch. Everyone was giggling. The make-up artist was gay and had to put concealer on the actor's bottom. His hands were shaking.

WEREN'T YOU A BIT, EM, EMBARRASSED WHEN THEY SHOWED YOU THE SCRIPT? Actually, I read the script at home. I was laughing. If you are open-minded, you would react in the same way.

WHAT'S THE BEST AD YOU'VE EVER BOUGHT? This one. Sales are doing very well but, obviously, it has just started.

AND THE WORST? It was for Close-Up toothpaste. It was basically a very dull story. A girl was looking on the carpet for her cat's faeces. I may believe her and they got close, which is the brand idea. It never ran. It was so bad I said I'm not going to air it.

DAVID McGRATH

TV to show more ads?

Viewers' groups want less not more advertising, says Alex Benady

This is a nervous time for advertisers and commercial terrestrial TV channels as the Independent Television Commission considers proposals to increase the amount of advertising allowed on television.

ITC rules permit an average of 7½ minutes advertising an hour between 6pm and 11pm and seven minutes for the rest of the day. But the advertising industry wants this gradually increased to nine minutes to bring terrestrial TV into line with satellite and the rest of Europe.

The ITC's ruling, due next month, could have a profound effect on the £3 billion-a-year TV advertising market. It has also provoked an intense debate. At the heart of the matter is the issue of spiralling costs on ITV. During the past two years, prices have risen by up to 40 per cent for some audiences. One 30-second advertisement during Coronation Street or Inspector Morse now costs up to £120,000.

The problem is that mass-market brands need ITV. It is still the only way to reach mass audiences. But recently the demand for air time has shot up, while ITV audiences have slumped, says Bernard Balderstone, of Procter & Gamble, the UK's largest TV advertiser and one of the leading lights behind the proposals.

The advertisers hope that an increase in the supply of advertising time will drive prices down.

TV stations are shy about stating their position publicly. One would expect ITV to favour the moves. Though it would welcome any extra revenue, it is worried that an increase in advertising time would reduce its negotiating power with the advertisers.

Thirty seconds in prime time can cost £120,000

More significantly, it doesn't want to appear too greedy because the ITV companies have to renegotiate their licence fees with the ITC.

The ITC says viewers' interests will be paramount. Paul Smeeth of the ITC says: "We will consider not only the effect on advertisers, but also the effect on programming, the financial positions of the stations and most importantly the effect on the viewing public."

Predictably, the proposals have been criticised by viewers' groups and consumer representatives who say there is too much advertising on television already. Benet Middleton, of the Consumers' Association, argues: "These proposals offer no benefit to consumers. More or longer breaks would just make consumers worse off."

Jocelyn Hay, the chairman of the lobby group the Voice of the Listener and Viewer, takes a stronger line. "They will destroy the quality of British television if they are not careful," she says. "Many people will find ads irritating and annoying. They are tolerable in limited doses but viewers will not stand for substantial increases in minutage."

The advertisers counter that more ads will lead to more revenue which should lead to better-quality programming and economic benefits.

Despite the alliance of advertisers, agencies and some stations, it seems likely that this particular battle will be lost.

However, if the ITC rejects their proposals, some advertisers say privately they will consider an appeal to Chris Smith, the Culture Secretary, and, failing that, they could then appeal to either the Office of Fair Trading or the European Court, claiming an unfair restraint of trade.

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Moves to put a gloss on television news

The trend towards a cadre of tele-luvvies to present the news is causing resentment, says Michael Gove

It isn't the only TV station with a Premier League. Both ITV and BBC screen competitions every night as a counterweight to the football focus on satellite. The rivalry between television reporters and news presenters satirised in *Drop the Dead Donkey* and captured by William Hurt and Holly Hunter in *Broadcast News* provide the stories of greatest interest to the nation's newsrooms.

Proof, as if it were needed, comes in an interview in this week's *Radio Times* with the BBC's Foreign Affairs Editor, John Simpson. The elegant hero of several Balkan bulletins takes a sideways look at his colleagues: Martin Bell and Maryn Lewis, the satirical apostle of the good news gospel. His argument, that news needs neither an "involved" approach nor geeing-up with happy talk, is impeccable but the real interest lies in the glimpse the interview gives into the ego-jostling of television's finest.

Simpson is also honest enough to admit that there is a point to the recently circulated BBC memorandum, which suggests "difficult" foreign news is made more accessible if relayed by glamorous presenters, whether it's Chris Evans, Ulrika Jonsson or the newsroom swells. The prospect of an elite cadre of tele-luvvies chosen on ground of

glamour appears to be spreading. Michael Gove, the Conservative MP, has said, to fear. Other reporters, however, are gunning for the limelight. The rivalry between television reporters and news presenters satirised in *Drop the Dead Donkey* and captured by William Hurt and Holly Hunter in *Broadcast News* provide the stories of greatest interest to the nation's newsrooms.

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Friday nights with *Friends* and *Frasier*, but Jennifer Aniston isn't the only American model to get British executives excited. American news-gathering techniques and presentation innovations are studied as assiduously as any ratings in Television Centre.

One presenter or two? Well, what does CNN do? More carefully crafted packages? Well, they're moving more to live links Stateside, so get the reporter breathless and chatting urgently to the studio...

In my own time at the BBC, I remember television executives' breathless and urgent after seeing the American documentary magazine, *60 Minutes*, anxious to emulate its immediacy and authority. Its impact on current affairs producers was as profound as any mission to explain.

Moves to establish more cadres of star correspondents may be an example of native wisdom but the practice has been around in the US for years. To be fair, some of CNN's stars, such as Peter Arnett, have not built their careers on skilful use of the powder puff.

Increasingly, star correspondents are less eye-witnesses and more distant voices. Lowly reporters and researchers are dispatched as "legmen" to conduct inter-



John Simpson says news needs neither an "involved" approach nor geeing-up with happy talk

views and collect pictures that will form the spine of a report narrated by a correspondent who may not have strayed much beyond the cuttings library and the editing suite.

The trend is anathema to men such as Bell and Michael Nicholson. They may have their eccentricities, driving some colleagues to muttered criticism, but none of their peers would deny their reporting is authoritative and bespoke. They have operated in the best traditions of their craft, relying on the footage they secured and their presence at the scene to give the viewer the big picture.

They are, however, increasingly seen as yesterday's heroes. Executives do not want to risk their stars straying too far from their contractual commitments or the studio. Reporters at the BBC used regularly to grumble about the dominance on the *Nine O'Clock News* of star names, such as the former Social Affairs Editor Polly Toynbee, when broadcasts had grown out of the work of others. For some, the practice of allowing bigger beasts to elbow juniors out of the way blunted the incentive to produce original journalism. Why dig so hard when the treasure would rest in another's hands?

And, usually, well-manicured hands at that. Although the ITN famous five, unlike their TV-am forerunners, have a sound track record in the newsgathering front line there is a growing perception that fortune favours the babe.

Broadcasting's greats were figures who wore authority, rather than Armani, lightly. John Cole, Peter Snow and Alistair Burnet had personalities formed in the field and faces that showed it. The prominence now given to presenters such as Channel 5's Kirsty Young and some of ITN's *Boys Own* heroes irks more grizzled operators.

It would be wrong to suggest that the Atlantic tide of froth will sweep over all the familiar contours of quality broadcasting. Both *Channel 4 News* and *Newsnight* give prominence to reporters on the basis of hard journalistic ability, develop their own young talent and give them a chance to shine. In both programmes, the quality

of the reporting and analysis has been held to be sufficient to hold the viewer without the need for star-making. Reporters such as Elinor Goodman, Mark Mardell and Evan Davies command an audience with the natural authority of experts whose reports bear their distinctive signature. They do not need to rely on either "projection" from executives or cannibalising the work of others to excel.

Discerning viewers have come to trust reporters who rely on contacts and rigour for their prominence rather than their place in an executive strategy. Picking winners is as likely to fail in broadcasting as it has done in every other industry. The stories, and the viewers, should be the judge and jury.

THE LISTENER

THE NEWS BEHIND THE HEADLINES

R4 runs with Black?

FEMALE knees are weakening at Broadcasting House over rumours that the handsome athlete Roger Black is about to become the new voice of sport on Radio 4. Executives are said to be courting the 400m hero to present a regular slot on the new Friday-night programme that will replace *Sport on 4*, axed last week. So far, the BBC refuses to confirm the rumours, but female staff are said to be thinking of organising a campaign. An insider says: "We are living in hope, great hope."

Shake it up

JOURNALISTS at *The Guardian*, where the laid-back pace of life and complicated union agreements belong to an age long forgotten in the rest of Fleet Street, could be in for a few shocks. Bob Gavron, the millionaire printing businessman who became chairman of the newspaper in January, has got his feet under the table and has been telling



Black: sports voice?

Tinky tale

THE much-publicised departure of Tinky Winky from the hallucinatory world of *The Teletubbies* was not as unexpected as it may have seemed. In the new BBC magazine, *Teletubbies*, Tinky Winky is suspiciously absent from a picture line-up. Scandalously, his place is taken by a big brown bear. BBC insiders say the magazine was being printed weeks before it was revealed that Dave Thompson, the actor inside the Tinky suit, was leaving.



Tinky Winky and Po

However a BBC spokesman denied victimisation of Tinky Winky. "To suggest a conspiracy is ridiculous," he said.

friends what he thinks of the place. "It's great," he says. "But I would like to see it become a bit more commercial. The only thing is that there isn't a single accountant on the board. It would be nice to have someone who could count." The newsroom's sandal-wearers are said to be thinking of clubbing together for an abacus.

Too Frank

PITY Frank Johnson, Editor of *The Spectator*, who apparently lacks the courage to print the articles he commissions. Last week Johnson invited Alan Rusbridger, *The Guardian's* Editor, to write a reply to the *Spectator* columnist Paul Johnson, who has tirelessly berated him in the magazine for his role in the Aitken case. On reading the copy—which included references to Johnson's wife, Marigold—the Editor decided it was too cruel for his magazine. Rusbridger, now preparing to join Cabinet members in Tuscany for the summer holidays, is unimpressed. A Farringdon Road voice says: "He thinks it's rather pathetic of Frank."

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THE GLAMOUR BRIGADE



Kirsty Young, Chris Evans and Ulrika Jonsson — making news more accessible?

Spin doctors in overdose

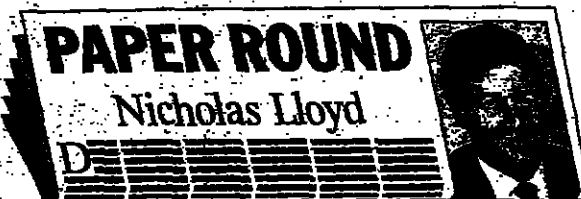
At a dinner party in the mid-1980s with newspaper editors and political insiders, I discussed how a famous Tory bigwig might tell the Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of the forthcoming exposure of his alleged relationship with a woman other than his wife.

Despite a great deal of mirth and some wit, no guest came up with a sensible solution to this daunting task but I was reminded of that evening when I read the astonishing story of Robin Cook's secret affair with Gaynor Regan, his Commons secretary.

Admittedly, Tony Blair is nowhere near as terrifying as Mrs T, but one can't help wondering exactly how Mr Cook breached the subject when he telephoned the PM on the first day of his three-week summer holiday in Tuscany. For as Mr Blair unpacked his swimming trunks in the sumptuous borrowed villa he must have felt things were going remarkably well.

Yes, there was the surprising by-election loss in Uxbridge and a bumpy Question Time about Lord Simon of Highbury's shares. But there was a great deal to celebrate in an impressive 100 days of Labour rule.

These happy musings, however, were rudely destroyed by the ringleader of the scrambled hotline with Mr Cook, the man who introduced ethical considerations into the Foreign Office mission statement, telling the PM what the News of the World was about to tell



PAPER ROUND

Nicholas Lloyd

everybody else. As Harold Macmillan pointed out, nearly 30 years ago: "Events, dear boy, events, cause governments the most trouble."

Yet some of the handling of this tricky personal scandal underlines how much new Labour has learnt about dealing with the media from the mistakes of the last Government.

There was no humiliating hide and seek routine with journalists as there was with Tory Minister Tim Yeo. No family man stunts, as with David Mellor.

Mr Cook was wheeled out to make a personal statement for the Saturday evening television newscasts before the News of the World exclusive was on the streets.

Secondly, Downing Street instantly issued a statement both humane and worldly. In an ideal world, said the statement, all marriages would be lasting but the truth was "these situations do arise and the Prime Minister hopes Robin and Margaret can be left to rebuild their lives."

But then Labour's enthusiasm for spin doctoring went too far. The Sunday newspapers were fed details about a new plan to save the Royal Yacht Britannia and the *Sunday Times* was briefed that Chris Patten, the former Governor of Hong Kong and possible future Tory leader,

could be prosecuted for allegedly leaking classified documents about a secret deal with China over Hong Kong's future.

On Sunday morning, Peter Mandelson, Minister without Portfolio, gave the story a boost by saying in a much-flagged appearance on the BBC's *World This Weekend* that a Government investigation would take place.

The Tories cried foul, and by Tuesday the conduct of Labour's spin doctors had become a front page story in its own right.

"Blackening someone like Chris Patten by virtually suggesting that somehow he has betrayed the national interest, in order to get Cook's little local difficulty off the BBC

News, is going too far," a political editor told me.

The current Patten smear row apart, most lobby correspondents have so far grudgingly admired Labour's ability to control the information available to the press.

But this has made ministers and MPs reluctant to utter anything except the Government's agreed line, making the lobby correspondent's job much more difficult.

"Not many Labour people are prepared to have lunch," I was told. "Certain trusted new Labour chaps like Stephen Byers and Geoff Hoon are used to put across the message Blair wants, but most fear they'll get the chop if they say something out of turn."

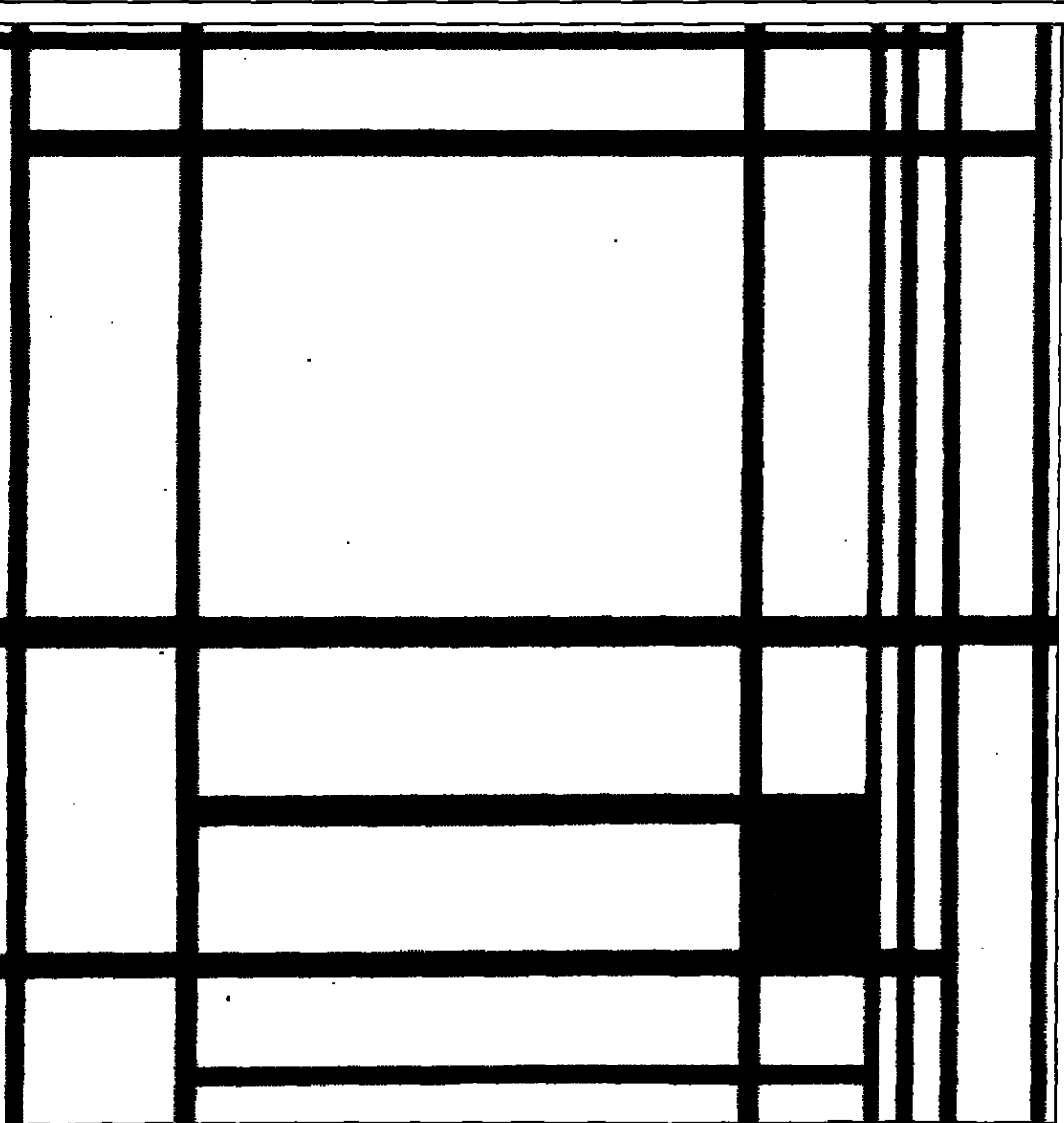
There's a definite policy of minimising contact with the press.

It will be fascinating to see if Downing Street can continue to keep the lid on Labour MPs who become disgruntled when leaky ministers are fighting for limited spending resources or, worse, some are embittered by sacking.

Meanwhile, Mr Mandelson and Downing Street have ruefully learnt that while you can fool some of the press some of the time, you can't fool all of the press all of the time. They stand accused of going over the top to have the Cook scandal played down.

Good spin doctors should be heard but not seen. And they certainly should not become the subject of embarrassing front page stories.

© Brian MacArthur is on holiday.



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BUSINESS EDITOR Patricia Wheatcroft

WEDNESDAY AUGUST 6 1997

NatWest chiefs hit at 'fevered' speculation



Derek Wanless, left, with Lord Alexander yesterday

By ROBERT MILLER
BANKING CORRESPONDENT

NATWEST Group's most senior executives have launched a bid to keep their jobs and to prove the troubled bank has an independent future as it produced a disappointing set of half-year results.

Lord Alexander, who said improving returns to shareholders was a key priority, added: "There have been tough, clear decisions."

Mr Wanless said that NatWest, which lifted its interim dividend 10.4 per cent to 10.6p, payable on October 8, had a strong independent future. Earnings per share were 28.5p, compared with a first-half loss last year of 6.3p, where the figures were distorted by write-offs.

The main drag on progress

taken tough and decisive action where necessary, including the problems of a flailing Australian subsidiary, difficulties with its business in Spain, and a "bankrupt" US division.

Lord Alexander, who said improving returns to shareholders was a key priority, added: "There have been tough, clear decisions."

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The main drag on progress

came from NatWest Markets (NWM), its troubled investment banking arm. Profits from NWM in the six months to June 30, fell by £161 million to £8 million. The cost of the mispricing of interest rate options, revealed in February, is entered in the NWM accounts at £85 million. General dealing profits at NWM fell to £265 million, compared with £307 million previously.

The Securities and Futures Authority (SFA), the City watchdog for brokers and futures dealers, is investigating the NWM options losses and it is likely that disciplinary action may be taken against the bank for a failure of management controls.

The star performer in the

NatWest portfolio was its UK retail banking operation, which more than doubled its pre-tax profits to £453 million from £222 million last time.

Staff numbers fell by 2,700 at NatWest UK, which is on target to reduce its branch network to 1,750. Income from card services rose 18 per cent to £28 million and insurance services saw income grow £6 million to £60 million. The NatWest mortgage book grew 10 per cent to £13.8 billion.

Elsewhere in the group, Lombard increased profits by £5 million to £110 million and the Ulster Bank group, which is still keen to buy TSB Ireland, contributed £70 million, an increase of £4 million.

Courts, the private bank,

saw pre-tax profits rise £3 million to £51 million although provisions for bad and doubtful debts jumped to £23 million, from £3 million, after a "one-off" £13 million writedown arising from "an incident" with a customer in America that it refused to explain further.

NatWest Wealth Management, which includes Gartmore, the fund manager acquired last year and whose chief executive, Paul Myrers, was appointed to the main NatWest board yesterday, saw profits rise to £67 million from £52 million.

NatWest shares lost 35p on the day to close at 835p.

BUSINESS TODAY

STOCK MARKET INDICES	
FTSE 100	4980.8 (+64.9)
Yield	3.28%
FTSE All share	2314.74 (+24.34)
Nikkei	19514.45 (+153.62)
New York	
Dow Jones	8197.52 (-0.93)
S&P Composite	952.61 (+2.31)
US RATE	
Federal Funds	5 1/8% (5 1/8%)
Long Bond	10 1/2% (10 1/2%)
Yield	6.49% (6.48%)
LONDON MONEY	
3-month Interbank	7 1/4% (7 1/4%)
Life long gilt	11 1/4% (11 1/4%)
STERLING	
New York	1.6258 (1.6315)
London	1.6274 (1.6308)
DM	3.0579 (3.0598)
FF	10.3220 (10.2520)
SF	2.4965 (2.4978)
Yen	193.54 (192.50)
£ Index	105.7 (105.3)
DOLLAR	
London	1.8795 (1.8860)
DM	6.3520 (6.2960)
SF	1.5348 (1.5251)
Yen	116.14 (116.25)
£ Index	106.8 (106.2)
Tokyo close Yen 118.62	
NORTH SEA OIL	
Brent 15-day (Oct)	\$19.50 (\$19.45)
GOLD	
London close	\$319.25 (\$323.65)
* denotes midday trading price	

BP rise fuels buyback plan

By OLIVER AUGUST

PLANS to buy back shares "from time to time" were yesterday announced by BP after record interim profits of £1.5 billion, up from £1.2 billion.

The oil group will start by buying back shares worth £300 million to expand its employee share option scheme during the next few months. BP said it preferred a buyback to issuing new shares.

The size of further buybacks has not yet been fixed, according to the company, which wants to wait for the Government to announce its changes to rules on dividend tax credits in March. Shareholders will be asked to approve the buyback plan at the annual meeting next April.

John Browne, chief executive, dismissed accusations that the buyback showed a lack of ideas for what to do with the growing profits. He said BP had several options for continued growth, although a substantial UK acquisition was not one of them. He stressed that capital expenditure was up 10 per cent in dollar terms so far this year.

BP shares closed 40 1/2p higher at 862 1/2, half a penny under its record high of 863p last Tuesday. The interim dividend was 10.75p (9.25p). Earnings per share stood at 20.5p (23.8p) because of exceptional items.

BP said the results were fuelled by higher downstream and chemicals earnings, with volume increases in all areas and further cost savings. Its 1997 goal of improving underlying performance by £200 million was said to have been achieved already.

Simon sells shares, page 1
Tempus, page 26

Hampel report attacked as 'missed opportunity'

By PHILIP BASSETT AND JASON NISSE

THE Government's plans for a "constant scrutiny" of how companies are run in Britain was rejected yesterday by Sir Ronald Hampel, chairman of the committee of industrialists reviewing the proposals.

Sir Ronald, who is also chairman of ICI, said that he saw no need for the Government's proposed standing panel on governance. The interim report of the Hampel committee rejected further rules on corporate governance as well as the principles of the stakeholder democracy espoused by Tony Blair. The report was attacked by professional bodies, shareholder groups and trade unions as a missed opportunity.

Labour has said it will consider a proposal for a standing examination panel into the way companies are run in the UK. While ministers will not make any early move on the issue, they are hoping Sir Ronald will change his stance before publication of the final report this year.

The Department of Trade and Industry said last night that it hoped publication of the interim Hampel report would stimulate a "lively" debate on corporate governance issues.

The dispute will bring further discomfort to Lord Simon of Highbury, the minister attacked for not selling shares in BP, where he was chairman, as he is a member of the Hampel committee.

Launching the inquiry's report, Sir Ronald said: "We do not see the need for a permanent panel." While corporate governance issues needed to be examined from time to time, a permanent panel would address itself to "every small problem" in business.

Following the Cadbury and Greenbury reports on corporate governance, he hoped that the Hampel report would be the last for some time



Sir Ronald Hampel, who headed the inquiry, did not see the need for a permanent panel on governance

though, once responses have been received, Hampel will draw all three together into a single document aimed at improving companies' corporate governance. Sir Ronald said his inquiry might suggest that the Stock Exchange should take responsibility for issuing the compiled report.

Sir Ronald insisted his inquiry had not diluted the recommendations of the previous reports of the Cadbury or Greenbury committees. Their codes and other regulations were supported by the new inquiry, but the inquiry doubted whether the idea of a uniform, code-based approach could be applied to other aspects of corporate governance beyond the accountability of

companies and their boards.

Publication of the interim report drew strong responses. Brendan Barber, deputy general secretary of the TUC, said it was a "wasted opportunity, which leaves key issues unresolved." The "weakness and narrow focus" of the inquiry's report showed that the voluntary approach to governance had reached its limit, and he called on the Government to act to tackle short-termism in industry.

The Institute of Chartered Accountants was concerned about the idea that there was no need for rules on the length of service of directors or whether the role of chairman and chief executive should be split. "Principles are fine but

they need to be backed up with a fairly robust code," said Andrew Carey of the ICA's corporate governance group. "We agree there should not be a rule book, but it should not be a do-it-yourself manual."

John Kay, director of London Economics and a strong proponent of the stakeholder democracy, said the Hampel committee had misunderstood the duties of directors of a company. "They have failed to address the real problem that there is no real accountability of management. Company annual meetings are like East European elections before the Berlin Wall came down."

Commentary page 25

Zeneca's finance director joins GEC

By OLIVER AUGUST

GEORGE SIMPSON, the GEC managing director, yesterday signalled further corporate changes for the industrial group with the appointment of John Mayo as finance director.

Mr Mayo, currently the Zeneca finance director, will start at GEC on October 1. He will be succeeded by Jonathan Symonds who is currently chairman of KPMG's global pharmaceutical group. He has been working with Zeneca for the past five years.

Mr Simpson said: "John has a well-deserved reputation as one of this country's best finance directors. His experience with Warburg and ICI, where he advised upon the corporate restructuring of the company, is highly relevant to the challenges and opportunities now facing GEC."

The appointment of Mr Mayo, 41, is the latest move by Mr Simpson to restructure the group after the departure of his predecessor, Lord Weinstock. David Newlands, the finance director, resigned on Budget day.

Last month, Mr Simpson raised the prospect of a £4 billion flotation of GEC-Alsthom, its rail and power joint venture.

Mark under pressure

THE mark fell further against sterling and the dollar as the Bundesbank failed to open the door for higher mark interest rates. Sterling ended nearly two pennings higher at DM3.0564 in London, sending its index up from 105.3 to 105.7.

In New York, the dollar surged from DM1.8663 overnight to above DM1.88. Some German analysts have identified a rate of DM1.90 as the point the Bundesbank would need to act.

Otmar Issing, Bundesbank chief economist, admitted to a German magazine that the mark was second only to money supply in interest rate policy. He said: "It's not the level, but the rapid decline in the value of the mark that is a cause for concern."

Industrial output, page 24

Analysts tipping Ladbroke to make offer for Capital Corporation

Beckett blocks LCI bid for casino rival

By DOMINIC WALSH



Beckett: shock decision hits Capital

LADBROKE Group was being tipped last night to launch a bid for Capital Corporation after Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade, stopped London Clubs International, the rival casino operator from renewing its £190 million bid for Capital.

Mrs Beckett's shock decision sent Capital's shares 19p lower, to 165p, but analysts expect the shares to bounce back today in anticipation of a bid from Ladbroke. "Ladbroke are definitely interested provided the price is right," one analyst said. "If they could get it for £2 a share they'd be happy."

LCI's hostile bid for Capital was halted in February when the deal was referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Yesterday Mrs Beckett decided to block any bid from LCI after accepting the conclusion of the MMC and Office of Fair Trading that

it would operate against the public interest. LCI has seven casinos in London while Capital, whose chief executive is Alan Hearn, operates Crookfords and the Colony Club.

Mrs Beckett rejected LCI's argument that the international nature of gambling meant the main competition to London's upmarket casinos came from overseas establishments. She argued that even if LCI had agreed to divest one of its own casinos customer choice would have been reduced.

"The MMC found that the relevant market for the purposes of the merger comprised the ten most upmarket casinos in London. If the merger went ahead, LCI would have a share of around 80 per cent of this market," said Mrs Beckett. "The merger would leave customers with inadequate protection against the considerable scope given to

LCI to reduce the quality of services and raise charges."

Alan Goodenough, chief executive of LCI, said the decision displayed "a woeful lack of understanding" of the casino business and the tight regulatory control exerted by the Gaming Board. "To suggest this would have given LCI control of charges is a madness," he added. LCI's shares fell from 402 1/2p to 38 1/2p, a clear sign the City was expecting clearance. One analyst said: "It's utterly illogical... it has to be politically driven."

Capital Corp, which has spent £4 million defending itself against LCI, is now expected to take up an option to purchase a third London casino, the Cromwell Mint, for up to £25 million.

Commentary, page 25
City Diary, page 27

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TIM 6/8 PDX

Property firm slips after red warning

By DOMINIC WALSH

SHARES in Chesterton International, the troubled property consultant and estate agent, dived 23½p to 33½p as the company admitted full-year results would be substantially below expectations and could dip into the red. A final dividend is unlikely.

Michael Holmes, who became chief executive in April, said that figures for the year ended June 30 would be affected by disappointing final-quarter trading, a number of one-off costs and the adoption of more prudent accounting policies. Write-downs of £2.2 million were flagged at the half-year to cover redundancy payments, aborted acquisition expenses and a review of accounting policies.

His predecessor, Giles Ballantine, left last September after the discovery of a £1.4 million black hole resulting from serious accounting errors. The write-off contributed to a collapse in pre-tax profits last year from £5.3 million to £2.4 million. Mr Holmes said that a review of the company's businesses had found no further black holes, although he had decided to change accounting policies to bring Chesterton into line with competitors.

Fewer than 100 of the close on 2,000-strong staff are likely to be made redundant, but there could be further board cuts from 13 to 9, he said. An important element of the review had been to free up senior fee-earners who had become bogged down in administration.

Mr Holmes added: "It's about time we started delivering some predictability to shareholders." The business fundamentals were sound and he was confident of its prospects.

Tempus, page 26

Industrial output rebounds more sharply than expected

By GRAHAM SEARJEANT, FINANCIAL EDITOR

INDUSTRIAL production jumped 1.4 per cent in June, rebounding more sharply than expected as cold, wet weather boosted demand for gas and electricity. In May, output fell 1.1 per cent.

Manufacturing output also recovered more modestly, growing 0.4 per cent in June after a 1.1 per cent fall in May.

Over the second quarter as a whole, government figures and survey evidence from the CBI, the London Chamber of Commerce and the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and

Supply confirm that economic growth is still heavily skewed. Services continue to boom, but manufacturing is stagnating as the surge in sterling hits export prospects.

The Bank of England's monetary policy committee, which starts its monthly meeting today, will again be faced with a dilemma. Deals on Life project that base rates will rise by at least a quarter point to 7 per cent to curb buoyant consumer spending. Rates are projected to reach 7½ per cent by end-September.

Manufacturing output, however, was still 0.1 per cent lower in the second quarter of 1997 than in the first quarter. Industrial production, which includes oil and gas, mining and the utilities, rose only 0.4 per cent. Compared with the same period last year, manufacturing was up 1.6 per cent and production 1.3 per cent.

The CBI's regional industrial trends survey found falling export orders hitting manufacturers all round Britain. While domestic orders are good, sterling has left total orders flat or

falling in five of the 11 regions. Wales is the worst hit. Apart from the North, all recorded sharp falls in export prospects.

Regions with big foreign investments from companies such as Nissan in the North, Toyota in the East Midlands, and US electronics groups in Scotland are being hit less hard by sterling's strength.

Neil Blake, of Business Strategies, which does the survey with the CBI, said such companies took a longer term view and protected expensive investments from short-term

exchange-rate variations. A survey from the London Chamber of Commerce found that while most companies were growing, only 10 per cent reported higher exports, the least for four years.

At end July, the CIPS purchasing managers' survey for services showed continuing boom. Its activity index stood at 62.1, anything above 50 indicates expansion. Even here, there were initial signs that sterling is affecting service exports. The index was down from 62.9 in June.

Smiths agrees £136m bid for rival Graseby

By FRASER NELSON

SMITHS INDUSTRIES, the aerospace to medical supplies company, has agreed a £136 million bid for Graseby, its smaller rival, in a deal designed to create the world's largest mobile drug pump company.

The two companies, each market leaders in take-home belts that automatically administer controlled doses of drugs, have agreed a 21½p-a-share cash offer, a 41 per cent premium to Graseby's last closing price of 149½p.

Graseby makes three models of the pumps, which it is trying to sell in the US, and Smiths makes one version, which it is attempting to distribute in Graseby's dominant area of Europe and the Far East.

Smiths said it would supply Graseby with the disposable plastic bags used to store the drugs, adding another million units a year to its sales.

The two companies also intend to mount a joint bid for the \$400 million JCAD toxic chemi-

cal detector contract due to be issued by the US armed forces next year after merging their defence divisions.

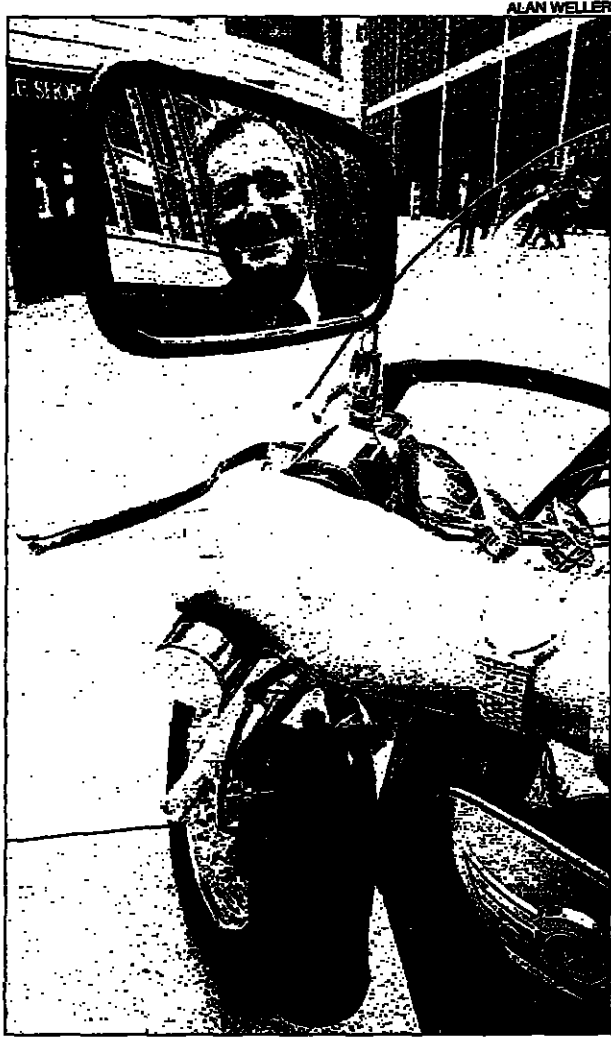
Graseby already has a \$77 million chemical agent detector contract, but had little chance of winning the larger deal without the big US presence that Smiths will bring.

Smiths said: "We are a first-tier defence company in the US. The manufacturers are reluctant to give away contracts to small companies which they do not work with already. Graseby's merger with us will give it instant credibility and let it go a lot further."

Smiths said that the acquisition should enhance earnings in the first full year after it shuts Graseby's £2 million-a-year head office. Some analysts said the deal will probably lift earnings by the end of the current financial year.

Smiths shares rose 9p to 804½p. Graseby shares leapt 58p to a high of 207½p.

Tempus, page 26



On the road: Paul Dixon, chief executive of Dixon Motors, which is buying Carnell Motor for £13.4 million and raising £17.6 million via a rights issue

Delay plea over gas market risk

By CHRISTINE BUCKLEY, INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

PRESSURE is growing for the gas regulator to delay the next phase of domestic competition amid growing industry unease and after a warning from Transco, BG's pipeline network, of inherent risk.

Transco has to implement competition by November 1 for two-and-a-half million homes in Scotland and north-east England, and made its fears known to Ofgas.

In a letter, Phil Nolan, managing director of Transco, said: "The solution we have offered to the industry is not without risk and, critically, relies on full industry support to be effective."

Customers could find it difficult to switch supplier and could receive incorrect bills.

Rivals to BG are also urging Clare Spottiswoode, the gas regulator, to slow the process. Calorix, Scottish Power and Amerasia Hess have called for a delay. But Ofgas said: "We believe that level of risk is manageable."

Transco has outsourced its telecoms network to ICL in a £160 million deal.

Ease off the gas, page 27

BTR to pay \$60m for Limatorque

BTR, the industrial group, is to buy Limatorque from American Manufacturing Corporation for \$60 million (£37 million). BTR said Limatorque, which has annual sales of \$76 million, will join BTR's Process Control division and become part of the valve business. BTR said: "There are good growth opportunities for this business as the demand for actuated valves is expected to continue to increase in the future as customers seek to reduce operating costs, raise productivity and increase safety."

Ian Strachan, BTR's chief executive, said: "The acquisition is the latest in a number of strategic purchases made to extend our product offering and geographic range in areas where we expect to see high growth."

Rentals slow Viacom

VIACOM, the entertainment company, said it lost \$217 million in the second quarter, equal to 66 cents a share, hamstrung by a \$323-million pre-tax charge in its poor-performing Blockbuster video rental business. Excluding this, the loss was about \$14 million, or eight cents, compared with a profit of \$26 million a year ago, or three cents a share. Viacom's revenues in the latest quarter rose to \$3.03 billion from \$2.79 billion.

Harwich port sold

STENA LINE yesterday revealed that it had sold the Harwich International port in Essex for £72 million to a group of institutions led by HSBC Private Equity. Stena said the sale means the company will be able to strengthen its financial position after last year's heavy loss. Harwich will continue to be managed by Michael Connellan, but as an independent company. It will focus on improving port services and developing its customer base.

Benfield makes £268,200

PENELOPE BENFIELD, the wife of James Benfield, a director of Marks & Spencer, has made the most of a surge in the company's share price in recent months by selling 45,000 shares in the company at a near-record high of 59p each, making a total of £268,200. Her husband is director of children's wear, home furnishings and direct mail. The total holding of the Benfield family now stands at 13,738 shares, the company said.

BBA buys brake firm

BBA, the engineering group, is to buy Becorit, the German brakes company, for £27.9 million in cash out of its existing resources. The deal takes BBA into the rail market and brings in technology to which it did not previously have access. BBA shares rose 9p to 357p. The deal is subject to adjustment based on actual net operating assets at completion. In 1996, Becorit made pre-tax profits of £4.8 million. Net assets to be acquired are valued at £4 million.

T&N adds £18m to fund

T&N, the vehicle components group fighting off claims for asbestos-related disease, yesterday raised £18 million by selling its Tennat engineering materials operations to its management. T&N will put the proceeds into the fund set up to cope with asbestos claims. After the deal goes through the fund will stand at £66 million, against a target of £323 million set for 1999. T&N shares rose 1p to 142½p. In the year to December 31, Tennat achieved pre-tax profits of £3.2 million.

TV transmission deal

BRITISH Digital Broadcasting, which is due to launch 15 digital television channels next year, has awarded a £200 million contract to transmit its services to Castle Transmission International, the company that bought the BBC's transmission business. Castle Transmission has a ten-year contract to broadcast the BBC's analogue TV services and its digital radio services. BDB is a joint venture between Granada and Carlton, the two largest ITV groups.

Greenalls hotel disposal

GREENALLS GROUP, the pub and hotel operator, has sold the 190-bedroom De Vere Hotel in Coventry to Britannia Hotels for about £6 million. The four-star hotel was one of four non-core hotels put up for sale through Knight Frank earlier this year with a combined price of about £25 million. A sale of the other three to a single buyer is thought to be imminent. Greenalls says the four do not fit the 20-strong De Vere group's profile of four-star hotels with leisure facilities.

Bakyrchik shifts to AIM

BAKYRCHIK GOLD, the mining company that is being forced to give up its full stock market listing, intends to switch to the Alternative Investment Market. Bakyrchik's move is necessary because it is surrendering control of the Kazakhstan gold mine that is its main asset as part of a financial rescue agreed with Indochina Goldfields, its largest shareholder. The company intends to issue details of the refinancing plans before the end of August.

Bowthorpe expansion

BOWTHORPE, the electronic equipment group, said it was in talks to buy an unnamed British telecoms and aerospace company for about £15 million. In a short Stock Exchange statement Bowthorpe said it signed a non-binding letter of intent for the acquisition that would fit within its network systems group. The group added that the transaction is subject to satisfactory due diligence. Its shares rose 1½p to 31p.

TOURIST RATES

Bank	Buy	Sell
Australia \$	2.91	2.13
Austria Sch	22.48	20.22
Belgium Fr	66.26	61.30
Canada \$	2.375	2.187
Cyprus Cyp£	0.508	0.486
Denmark Kr	12.23	11.34
Finland Mk	9.85	8.90
France Fr	10.77	10.00
Germany DM	3.22	2.98
Greece Dr	503	464
Hong Kong \$	13.40	12.23
Ireland P£	1.19	1.10
Israel Sh	6.09	5.44
Italy Lira	1764	2827
Japan Yen	205.18	181.60
Malta	0.589	0.630
Netherlands Gld	3.630	3.335
New Zealand \$	2.49	2.24
Norway Kr	13.21	12.27
Portugal Esc	321.53	286.50
S Africa Rd	3.29	3.23
Spain Pta	268.78	251.00
Sweden Kr	13.94	12.84
Switzerland Fr	274.664	254.588
Turkey Lira	1.735	1.592
USA \$		

Rates for small denomination bank notes only as supplied by Barclays Bank PLC. Different rates apply to travellers' cheques. Rates as at close of trading yesterday.

Windfall tax provision wipes out BAA profits

By SARAH CUNNINGHAM

THE windfall tax has almost wiped out first-quarter profits at BAA, the airports operator.

The company has set aside £102 million for the tax, which will be paid in two tranches in December this year and next year.

It initially estimated that the tax would cost it between £70 million and £100 million and said yesterday that the exact level still has to be agreed with the Inland Revenue.

It described the provision as enough to cover the "worst-case scenario". The one-off

charge leaves BAA with just £3 million post-tax profit compared with £98 million the previous year.

Excluding the exceptional charge, pre-tax profit in the three months to June 30 was 4.5 per cent higher at £136 million.

The number of passengers through its airports, which include Heathrow, Gatwick, Edinburgh and Glasgow, was up 7.8 per cent to 26.5 million during the three months.

This figure, which was higher than expected, helped

BAA's shares to add 20p to 580½p.

This quarter is the first to reflect the effects of the new regulatory formula on airport charges. The changes resulted in the charges at London airports being £2.5 million lower than they would have been before the change. The results also reflect the loss of revenue from airside cleaning and catering licences.

These factors were offset by a rise in retailing revenue from £150 million to £161 million.

Henlys sells motor division for £56m

By OUR CITY STAFF

HENLYS, the vehicle component and assembly group, is selling its motor division for £56 million as part of a plan to make acquisitions for its bus division.

The deal will leave Henlys with an estimated surplus of net cash of about £28 million, which the board intends to use on overseas acquisitions for the bus and coach division.

The motor division, which Henlys believes would require further investment, includes 32 dealerships covering most of the big car manufacturers. It is being sold to HMG, which has

been formed for the deal by Legal and General Ventures.

The deal, because of its size, requires approval from Henlys shareholders. The shares rose 25p to 44½p after the announcement. The purchaser will be allowed to use the Henlys name for motor vehicle distribution, in return for a royalty, but will not be allowed to use it as part of a company name.

The sale price includes the repayment of £5.6 million of debt and represents a premium of £6.6 million to net assets.

BT in talks over job cuts

BT meets union leaders today over plans to cut up to 5,000 jobs by next April. The meeting comes ahead of a strike next Tuesday by BT engineers in London over the use of contract workers.

The Communications Workers Union has complained about a lack of consultation over the reductions and also the increasing use of contractors for work previously done by BT staff. BT said it had consulted the CWU over the cuts, which emerged last week.

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Hampel opportunity for harm



COMMENTARY
by our City Editor

Why should we be surprised that the Hampel committee has pedalled so softly on hard and fast rules for how companies should behave? After all, getting a bunch of industrialists in charge of policing how companies should be run is like asking the Arsenal manager to chair the disciplinary hearings into the behaviour of Ian Wright.

Is it any coincidence that Lord Simon of Highbury, an Arsenal fan himself, should sit on the Hampel committee? The report goes on about companies deciding what is appropriate and not being answerable to anyone but shareholders. Lord Simon decided it was appropriate not to put his BP shares in a blind trust until he found that, as a minister, he was actually answerable to public opinion. Yesterday he said he would be selling his BP shares — more than six months ahead of when he had previously thought it might be appropriate.

If the last five years of debating the thorny issue of corporate governance has told us anything, it is that the management of companies cannot be allowed to police themselves. It is not in their interests to have strong non-executive directors. It is not in their interests to have demanding performance criteria and it is not in the interests of a dominating chairman and chief executive to split the roles. Only by telling managers how to behave and chastising them when they fail to

live up to those standards can they be made to follow the principles of "best practice" set out in Cadbury and Greenbury. But this is not how Sir Ronnie Hampel and his colleagues see it. Their two main themes are that hard and fast rules are not the way forward and that the only duties companies have is to their shareholders.

The first has its merits: nobody thinks the principle of ticking boxes is the way to regulate corporate governance. A company saying: "Look we've split the roles, we have a majority of non-executives on the board, we rotate directors every three years, we are perfect" may be anything but. There may be good reasons to back away from the guidelines. But there must be guidelines. And companies have to explain why they breach those guidelines rather than say: "It is appropriate for us to do things they way we want to do them."

Which neatly leads into the second issue. Hampel and Co say that directors of companies only have duties to their shareholders. So much for Tony Blair's stakeholder society. But this legalistic definition of directors' responsibilities ignores the

fact that institutional shareholders were not particularly good at policing companies before they had the guidelines in Cadbury and Greenbury.

Unless Sir Ronald is willing to harden his stance towards prescribing what companies should and should not do, the result of this committee's work will be to put back the debate on corporate governance. Then Government might feel inclined to prescribe on the subject.

NatWest in need of a break

Having delivered their unexciting figures, the best thing that Lord Alexander and Derek Wanless can now do is head off on their holidays, making sure to leave the mobile telephones behind. While there is always the possibility of a chance poolside encounter with a fellow financial services big wig, the

chances are that this way, they might avoid embarking on any more ill-fated courtships.

The lurch from Abbey National to Prudential as a potential partner has damaged NatWest's credibility rather more than the discovery of a loss, now totting up to £85 million, in NatWest Markets.

The bank is not a basket case and there were some bright spots in its half-year figures. But it has given the impression of having lost its way. Investor confidence in the top team has been severely dented and it will not be easy to rebuild. Any dalliance with another suitor would further damage an image bordering on the carelessly promiscuous.

Yesterday Lord Alexander and Mr Wanless indicated that they intended to avoid any more dangerous liaisons, a stance which was as much responsible for the tumble in the share price as the profit news. Speculators would have liked to see a

corporate deal but a hostile takeover of the bank is hardly likely. With accounting rules indicating that goodwill alone would add £7 billion to the price, a bidder would have to believe that NatWest was worth around £18 billion.

But if it is eventually to approach a new partner from a position of strength, there are extensive problems that NatWest must address. It has already moved to sort out the structure of NatWest Markets, although whether the group has a long-term future in investment banking remains unclear. Yet, although the profits from NatWest UK ostensibly more than doubled, helped by an absence of last year's restructuring costs, in some of its traditional markets, the bank appears to be losing market share. And for Coutts to lose £13 million to a single client is more than unfortunate.

What the bank needs now is a period of calm unblemished by

such costly mishaps. And another bank to take on the role of sector whipping boy. It was not so long ago that Midland was seen as the dog of the clearing bankers. Then Barclays found itself being criticised for its investment in BZW. Martin Taylor cleverly deflected that criticism, but that does not mean that BZW's problems have vanished.

Mrs B overplays her hand

The international high rollers who make up the clientele of London's top casinos may be cheered to know that the President of the Board of Trade has their best interests at heart but the City has reason to be perturbed by her decision to veto London Clubs' bid for Capital Corporation.

Mrs Beckett could claim that she was merely following the Monopolies Commission advice, but she has it in her powers to choose not to follow that advice and would have been well advised to do so. The two companies are players in one of the truly global markets, so their share of London casino business is irrelevant. Customers jet in

from far flung spots, often opting to chance their luck in private rooms where the scale of their wagers will remain a secret known to only a handful of people. There have surely been occasions when Middle Eastern princelings or Antipodean polo stars have little idea of which country they are in as they risk fortunes on the spin of a wheel.

Gamblers anonymous may believe these poor souls are in need of protection, but it is hardly up to Mrs Beckett to provide it.

But Mrs B, too, is betraying early signs of addiction. Without help, her interventionist tendencies could become a real problem. She was persuaded not to persist with her aim of insisting that all mergers should have to be justified on grounds of public interest, but she does appear to cling to the view that takeovers are distasteful.

Paired

GEORGE SIMPSON must be jolly glad to have found a high powered finance director to help him out at GEC. After all, having taken on the role of working peer to help out the Government, Mr Simpson will have to fit in running Britain's industrial giant with the Lords voting timetable. At least, for the time being, he and his chairman can share a car to Westminster, even if they go into opposite lobbies to cast their votes.

Controversy deepens over syndicate

By GAVIN LUMSDEN

CONTROVERSY at Lloyd's of London over the loss-making Syndicate 657 deepened yesterday as a second investment trust announced impaired results. Meanwhile, Archer, the managing agency behind the syndicate, hit back at critics.

Bentfield & Res Investments Trust, the corporate vehicle set up by the late Matthew Harding, said the performance of HCG, which it acquired for £70 million last September, had been held back by a £2.5 million investment in the syndicate. Otherwise, the trust had increased net asset value per share by 20 per cent.

Underwritten by David Lowe, now managing director of Thor Underwriting Agencies, the Syndicate 657 lost millions from 1993 to 1995 in the professional indemnity market. These losses are the subject of an inquiry by Lloyd's regulatory division after a complaint on Monday by New London Capital, another investment trust which has lost £6.5 million, that the syndicate's account

for 1993 had not been closed properly. But John Goldman, BRT chairman, yesterday claimed the account remained open. One analyst said Archer would have to address the issue of negligence. Investors who had bought in 1994 had been misled, he said.

In a statement to *The Times*, Stephen Wenman, chief executive of the Archer Group, the managing agent behind the syndicate, hit back at NLC. He said: "David Lowe's underwriting losses over the years have been unfortunate and well publicised. He said it was solely NLC's decision to invest heavily in the syndicate and rejected any possibility of compensation for the trust. A goodwill gesture had been made to all names, which NLC had rejected, he said."

Thor denied Mr Lowe had a record of losses at the syndicate or Blackmore Agency and Excess Insurance, where he previously worked. Beazley Group, one of four investors behind Thor, has pulled its support.

Raid raises prospect of Jardine bid

By JON ASHWORTH

LI KA-SHING, the Hong Kong property tycoon, has covertly swooped on Jardine Matheson Holdings and one of its main subsidiaries, raising the prospect of a takeover bid for the trading group.

Hutchison Whampoa Holdings and Cheung Kong Holdings, companies controlled by Mr Li, bought a combined 3.05 per cent stake in Jardine Matheson on August 1, according to filings to the Stock Exchange of Singapore. On the same day, the companies took a 3.06 per cent stake in Hong Kong Land, the Jardine subsidiary with extensive holdings in the former British colony.

Mr Li tried to buy Hong Kong Land in 1988. Jardine group shares have languished since secondary trading was moved from Hong Kong to Singapore two years ago, and are seen as cheap. The group is trading at an estimated 15 per cent discount to net asset value.

Analysts said a bid was possible, but the move might just be part of a trading play.

Hedging avoids loss at Ashanti

By PAUL DURMAN

SUCCESSFUL hedging has enabled Ashanti Goldfields, the Ghanaian mining company in which Lonrho holds a 33 per cent stake, to limit damage from a weak gold price.

Ashanti yesterday reported a fall in first-half pre-tax profits from \$39 million (£23.9 million) to \$24.1 million, with the second-quarter contribution tumbling from \$13.5 million to \$7.9 million. However, the company would have made a loss without the \$60.5 million earned in the half from forward sales of gold and other hedging techniques.

It achieved an average gold selling price of \$450 an ounce, more than \$100 above the average spot price this year.

Production problems left output from Obuasi, the company's main mine, slightly short of target at 47,000 ounces, but Ashanti said it expects to meet this year's overall target of 1.1 million ounces.

Eighty per cent of next year's output is hedged, at \$428 an ounce. *Tempos*, page 26

Willis Corroon and Abbey launch adviser

WILLIS CORROON, the insurance broker, and Abbey National are joining forces to create the UK's second-largest independent financial adviser (Gavin Lumsden writes).

Abbey National Independent Financial Advisers (ANIFA) and Willis Corroon Financial Planning will merge by the end of the year to form Willis National, which will start with about 200 consultants. Both sides said that there will be no job losses because the businesses are complementary. ANIFA has focused on advising private investors, and WCFP has aimed solely at the corporate market.

Willis Corroon, which will hold 51 per cent of the new venture, announced half-year pre-tax profits of £60.2 million, down by £8 million, blaming the strong pound and tough competition in North America. Earnings per share fell from 10.7p to 8.6p after a decision to liquidate Sovereign, the underwriting subsidiary, raised the tax charge by £2.7 million. A 1.63p third interim dividend is due on October 1.

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Warning for regulator: ease off the gas

Christine Buckley finds BG's customers and rival companies strangely keen to delay deregulation

The plot could come from an Ealing comedy. The rivals of a monopoly business and customers of that monopoly, stepping up a campaign to slow down plans to introduce competition, seems odd. After all the customers have discounts of more than 20 per cent on their bills to look forward to and the rivals have market share to seize.

But for some independent gas companies and the Gas Consumers Council there is more at stake in the opening of the next area of Britain to competition than getting it started on time. Fearing administrative mayhem they are urging restraint on a regulator who is keen to enable two and a half million more homes to shop around for their gas supply to add to the existing two million as soon as possible. The preferred date for Scotland and northeast England to join the already competitive areas of the South West and South-East is November 1.

The view among many suppliers, including those with most to gain, such as the locally based Southpower, is that bringing in competition so quickly will trigger the confusion and administrative problems that dogged the first round of gas trials. Then controversy over the problems encountered in wrong bills, difficulties of switching supplier and marketing clouded the pioneering move to give households a choice of gas provider. As the next phase approaches suppliers and the consumers council are warning that more mistakes could prove fatal. They could so tarnish the image of gas competition that customers in the rest of the country shun choice when it arrives for them next year and stay with BG.

Clare Spottiswoode, the regulator, is keen to keep up the momentum of pushing BG into a competitive world — the ultimate objective of the privatisation of the company. She wants to press ahead with market development both to keep going a process that started more than a

year ago and, she says, to catch the winter period. Customers will be able to get up to £10 per month off their bills if they go with a new supplier, she has said. But if the system is being pushed too far, too fast, the concept of gas competition could fall on its face, critics fear.

The last area to be removed from the grip of BG, involving Dorset, the former county of Avon, and East and West Sussex, became competitive in February. The first area — the South West — started offering choice in April last year. So far only 22 per cent of customers have switched despite large price reductions offered by competitors to BG. For the next round of competition to be delivered by November 1 Transco, BG's pipeline network, has had to develop an interim solution that will

enable customers to switch gas company until the main system can be made ready. It is the robustness of this interim arrangement that rivals and the consumers council are fearful of. Transco itself has warned Ofgas that the interim measure "is not without risk".

On top of these increased fears about the mechanics of competition for Scotland and the North East are the concerns about how the market is shaping in terms of the numbers of companies committed to the national market. At the start of competition more than 10 companies piled into the South West. But with comparatively few customers switching supplier and the expense involved it is becoming clear that the gas market is likely to be made up of just a handful of national players.

The independent gas suppliers are all still gung ho that domestic competition can be viable for several companies on a national scale. The fierce competition between them makes it all the more vital that the market is not weakened by technical problems and customer mistrust.



ANTHONY HARRIS

Screen trades make for dull dog days

I used to be fun. When stocks were still traded on the exchange floor, the mice played hard once the cats were away. The August air was thick with paper airplanes, insults and rumours, and every now and then a broker would emerge trouserless in Throgmorton Street. And serious business was done, too. August was the traditional month for a French devaluation. Currency books were normally squared before the senior partners disappeared, though every now and then some bold soul left a short franc position open, and the champagne flowed.

Non-French central bankers also tended to be away, resting before the IMF annual jamboree but the Bank of England did play possum at least once. The franc was looking

strong for a change, so the Paris market decided to enliven the holiday with a ritual raid on sterling. But the Bank knew its Frenchmen; they might get busy on an August morning, but nothing would keep them from lunch. It let the pound fall all morning, but as soon as the lunchtime bell set in, it mounted the mother of all bear squeezes. The celebration took place on the wrong side of the Channel.

But it was the share market which usually saw the big action. What better time for launching a big hostile bid than while the defence was helpless on some distant beach? (No mobile phones, remember.) Some major restructuring was achieved in this way, until finance directors and their merchant banks learnt to provide better holiday cover. And helpful rumours could be launched untraceably (try that on the e-mail sure of eager circulation on the sleepy floor. This weakness was exploited by Sir Charles Clore and other canny operators, either softening the market for a bid, or using the rumour of one to lubricate a stealthy sales programme).

When it wasn't silly it was, you may argue, highly improper. Those playing these games were really trying to trade as insiders; today's remote-control market is, by contrast, clinically clean, and a good thing too, no doubt.

And I suppose it was bound to happen; the market in those days was not only technically primitive, but extremely small. Everyone on the floor knew everyone else, so there was a kind of intelligence network, though a faulty one. It could hardly happen today, even if traders still met on one floor. Launching a canard would be like trying to start a scare in the UN General Assembly: it would get garbled at once, and die away in minutes.

It isn't all gain, though. Memory suggests that there was a mass of sound information at large, along with the rubbish; indeed, had it not been so, nobody would have listened. Some of the most successful brokers were not the young trading junksies of today, but sociable types, apparently thick — they would have looked at home in a

rugger scrum, and quite a few were. But like Dorothy Sayers's splendid invention, Freddy Arbuthnot, whose advice Lord Peter Wimsey relied on, they were shrewd, and had a keen sense of smell. Memory suggests that fraudsters had a much harder time of it. Polly Peck? Wouldn't touch it, old boy. And BCCI? You must be joking.

‘They might get busy but nothing would keep them from lunch’

Mercedes-Benz drives deep into Dixie with a bold, new venture

Ian Brodie on a melding of cultures at the German carmaker's Alabama plant

Alabama has a new star. It is the three-pointed symbol of Mercedes-Benz, rotating above a glistening factory to announce the arrival of Germany's largest industrial manufacturer deep in the heart of Dixie.

Next month the all-new, four-wheel-drive Mercedes produced by this bold venture in transatlantic collaboration will begin rolling into American showrooms. They will not tarry there for long. The first 20,000 have been sold and the waiting list at some dealers stretches two years ahead.

Their arrival on American roads is the culmination of a remarkable melding of cultures, bringing together German engineers, committed to upholding the quality standards of Mercedes and open, friendly Alabamians, some of whom were unable to tell a nut from a bolt, but eager to learn from and to work for a world-famous company.

It is not the first time a German carmaker has set up in the South. BMW's plant in Spartanburg, South Carolina, is currently at full stretch, producing the much sought after BMW Z3 sports car. The Germans have made great strides to "bond" with the Americans. All workers are "team members" — outfitted, from the boss down, in polo shirts bearing their first name, in a sign of equality. There is no executive car park. Those who arrive first get the best spaces. And there is no executive dining room, just one canteen for all. The staid headquarters of Daimler-Benz in Stuttgart is said to have taken note of this egalitarianism.

The venture was made possible by extraordinary incentives and tax breaks from the state of Alabama, which was desperate to catch up with



All workers are "team members" — outfitted, from the boss down, in polo shirts bearing their first name

neighbouring states in attracting overseas firms. Alabama can also offer year-round good weather, educated workers, ample space, splendid roads and a choice of deepwater ports.

Alabama's incentives were worth nearly \$275 million (£170 million), or \$180,000 per worker. They included \$90 million for job training, \$42.6 million towards capital equipment for the assembly line, plus \$120.4 million for a rail spur to the plant, a new highway exit, piped water and the flattening of hills on the greenfield site north of Tuscaloosa.

Alabama also passed legislation granting a 20-year holiday from state taxes to companies making large capital investments. A break worth \$1 million a year to Mercedes-Benz. The package went so far beyond anything seen before that other states cried foul, although one confidentially offered to outbid Alabama. Many in Alabama also won-

dered if they were being too generous to foreigners. That ill-feeling has evaporated now the benefits are becoming apparent. The company will have a payroll of 1,500 and another 11,000 jobs are being created in the area by suppliers. Eventually there will be new houses, hotels and shops. The ripple effect will be felt throughout the state.

Even more important, perhaps, the project marks a coming of age for Alabama. Since the 1950s, the state has borne the stain of its opposition to the black civil rights movement. There were savage clashes in Selma, Montgomery and Birmingham. Publicity generated by the arrival of Mercedes-Benz allows Alabama to show it now has an integrated workforce.

Alabamians inundated Mercedes-Benz with 62,000 job applications. The Germans set up 60 hours of lessons and offering to narrow the numbers to the cream of the crop. Karl

Heinz Sauer, a seasoned Mercedes-Benz executive, looked for people with a willingness to work as a team. Knowledge of engineering was not essential, but an aptitude for it was. Applicants were shown how to read blueprints and how to weld. They were questioned about attitudes to work — for example, how would they deal with an unruly team member? Correct answer: In a calm manner, and if that fails seek help. Herr Sauer said: "Americans learn three times faster than anyone, including Germans."

The first 160 hired were sent to Germany for up to seven months of training. Sherry Snow and Angela Smith said that being so far from home was scary at first, but they would love to go back. They write to German families who befriended them. Ms Smith said: "Before I went over there I couldn't even change a tyre. Now I can fix my own car."

Dozens of German instructors moved to Alabama and 70 still work in the factory, teaching Americans exact procedures for every task, such as the right way to tighten a nut. Their children attend local schools, rapidly acquiring English with a southern twang. The Germans are overwhelmed by American friendliness and find their compatriots curd when they return home. The Germans have acquired a taste for southern barbecued ribs, the Americans for German wine and beer.

Residing over these social, national and automotive cross-currents is Andreas Renschler, chief executive officer or "team leader", who has been pivotal in pulling off the huge manufacturing and marketing gamble of building a new vehicle in a new country with untested workers.

He is a lanky, 39-year-old German who says the project started from scratch. He inter-

viewed hundreds for his management team before picking executives from Mercedes, Nissan, Toyota, General Motors and Ford. Given their differing corporate backgrounds, their early brainstorming sessions often lasted 15 hours at a stretch.

Total investment by Mercedes-Benz is \$1.1 billion, divided between Alabama and factories in Germany where engines and transmissions are made. The project is the firm's latest foray into globalisation that has seen the launch of various overseas assembly plants, including one in India making E-class Mercedes that have not caught on as well as expected.

Jürgen Schrempf, chairman of Daimler-Benz, says Alabama is a story about change in the way the company looks at itself and does things as well as about producing an entirely new vehicle. As luxurious as a Mercedes saloon car inside, the ML320 has serious off-road capability and a light price, \$35,000. Early reviews in the motoring press have been glowing. The US is the leading market for these sport-utility vehicles, but 40 per cent will go for export and the first right-hand drive versions are due in Britain next summer.

For quality control, production has started slowly, 70 vehicles a day, rising to 140 when a second shift is added next month and with an eventual target of 270. Projections are that a profit can be turned in four years, half way through the production cycle.

Hourly wages are from \$14 to \$19, high for Alabama but less than in Germany where the cost of living is considerably greater. The biggest difference is in hours worked — 2,000 a year in America compared with 1,500 in Germany. Unlike Germany, no unions have taken hold in the Alabama plant, where workers are genuinely proud to have been chosen by Mercedes.

Mr Renschler said: "People are the most important part of the operation. I must know what their problems are and if I cannot find a solution I'll tell them why. I don't want anyone here who won't let me talk to my team members. I don't need somebody to translate my thoughts to them."

Booking out

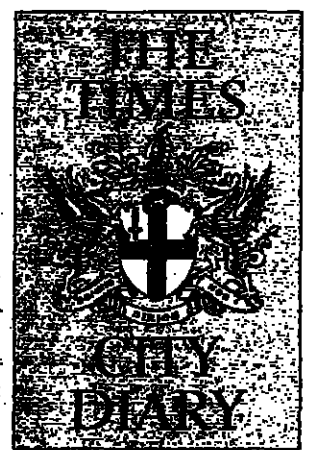
THE glamorous world of international casinos is light years away from the rather grubby business of running hostels for the homeless. So imagine my surprise to discover the other business interests of Alan Goodenough, whose persuasive powers were not good enough to convince Margaret Beckett, the President of the Board of Trade, to allow his London Clubs International to buy Capital Corporation. For the past couple of years, Lyric Hotels, a mid-market regional hotel chain where Goodenough is chairman, has been running the Thorncliffe Hotel, a 300-bedroom establish-

ment just off the M4 at Heston in west London. Its clientele bear little resemblance to London Clubs' high-rolling patrons.

According to a sales prospectus discreetly distributed by Christie & Co, the property agent, the Thorncliffe's customers are "referrals from a number of different local authorities" as well as "guests taken from the Heathrow Refugee Arrival Project". Tramps and undercarriage-clingers, in other words.

Lyric, which is considering a listing on the AIM, has decided to sell because the hotel does not fit the group's profile. It certainly can't be because it doesn't make money. In the year to February, the Thorncliffe made profits of £863,000 on turnover of £1.6 million, and this year is expected to make more than £1 million from sales of £1.8 million. Christie is asking for offers over £7 million.

THOSE nice, caring, people at The National Trust are beginning to resemble that breed of lawyers that hangs around hospital emergency entrances handing out business cards. Not content with selling properties to fund its stock market punts, it has taken to mail-shooting elderly members explaining how to go



about making a will. Michael Beaumont, head of the legacies unit, writes: "You may feel grateful for all the trust's places that you have been able to enjoy." Nothing like being subtle.

Overruled

HEADS you win... Last week, John Bridgeman, Director-General of Fair Trading, advised Margaret Beckett to grant conditional approval to the merger of PacificCorp and Energy Group on the ground that there were no competition concerns. She overruled him, saying that there were regulatory issues. This is a neat reversal on earlier days, when Bridgeman advised against the proposed merger of North West Water and Norweb on regulatory grounds. Ian Lang

Thai twist

BACKPACKERS in the Thai resort of Phuket, setting for those jungle-clad islands in *The Man With The Golden Gun*, are getting a taste of fine Italian fashion. Ferruccio Ferragamo, chief executive of the eponymous luxury goods group, has sent three of his children on a world trip — a reward for doing well in their studies. Salvatore and James, 25-year-old twins, are in the Thai resort with their sister Vivian, 23, en route to Australia, America and Mexico. Graduates of New York University, Salvatore did a stint with KPMG, while James was with Goldman Sachs in London. Vivian studied fashion and enjoyed a spell with Saks Fifth Avenue in New York. Expect a Thai twist in the next batch of Ferragamo handbags.

Pundit time?

COULD David Rigg, soon to step down as director of communications at Camelot, be destined for a new career as a political pundit? Rigg, 50 next year, has placed bets on every British general election since 1959, when he was a chirpy 11-year-old, and claims an unbroken success record. "The only thing I ever bet on is general elections and I have won on every one."

he tells me. He correctly predicted the Tory majority in 1992, and was right again in May, when he voted Labour for the first time. Not that he has always demonstrated an unerring political instinct.

DEFINITION of first officer (ie co-pilot) circulating among BA flight crew: "Second-in-command, does almost all of the work and gets almost none of the credit. His duties include feigning rapture as the captain describes in detail all 96 strokes of his last golf round, or the difficulties encountered during installation of the new central heating system in his five-bedroom house."

JON ASHWORTH



David Rigg likes to bet on general elections

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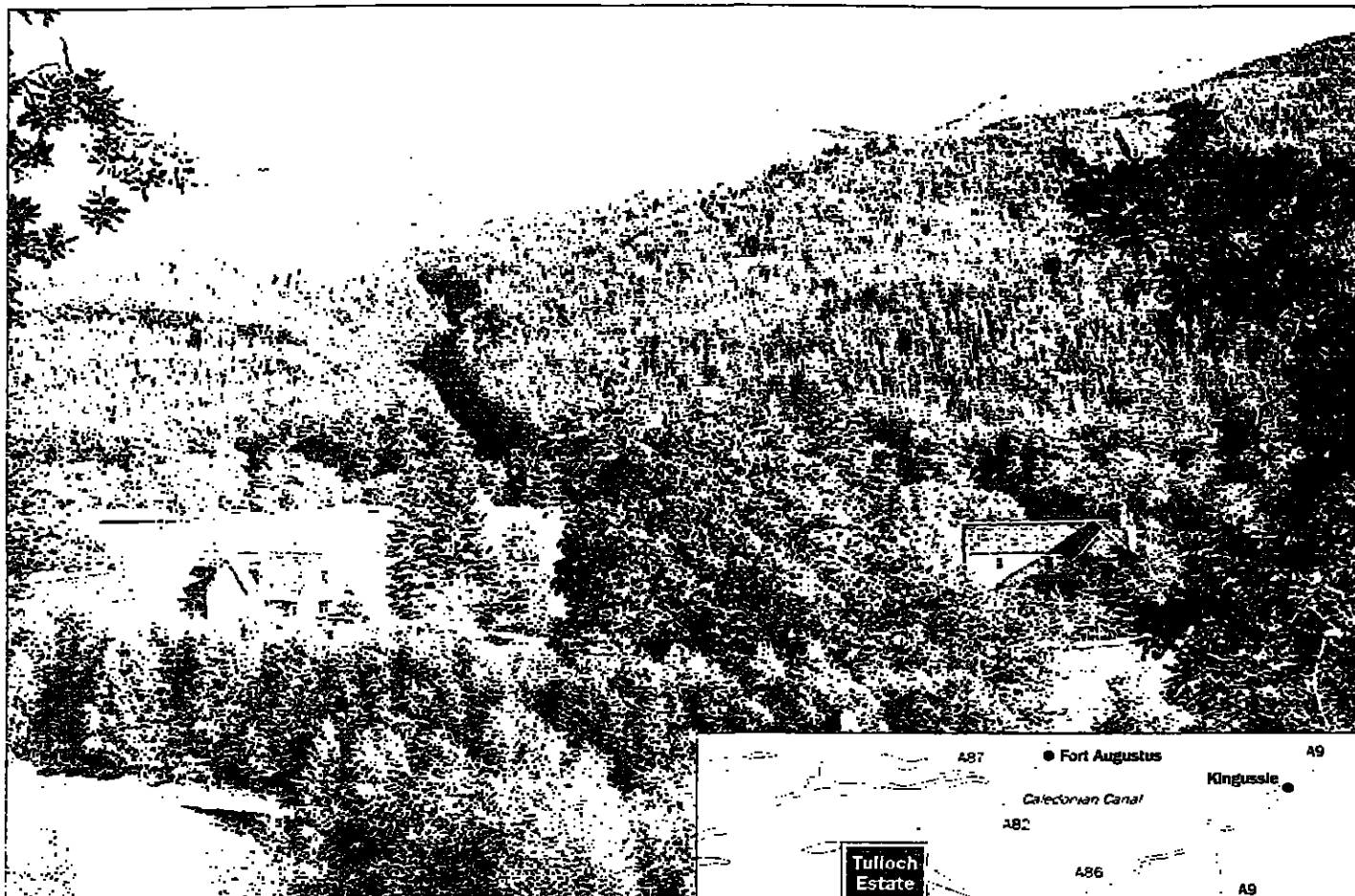
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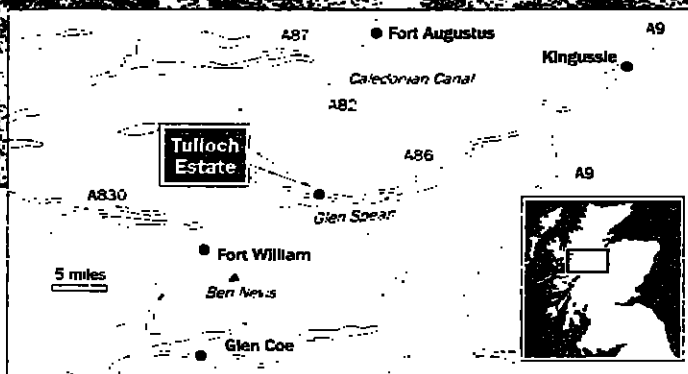
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Great shooting: the 6,044-acre Tulloch Estate in Inverness-shire

As the Glorious Twelfth approaches,
Diana Wildman reports on the
attractions of great Scottish estates



Join the shooting set

Supporting aficionados will be searing themselves up for the most high-profile date in the shooting calendar — the Glorious Twelfth. Next Tuesday is the first day of the grouse-shooting season, which continues in England until December 10 and in Scotland until mid-September, when deer stalking takes preference.

In the 1830s the Government made a law banning grouse shooting until August 12, as the young birds, born in May, were not considered good sport before that date. Scottish estates, which fell in value by between a third and a half during the recessionary years, are now almost back to their 1988 values, according to Andrew Rennie of Strutt & Parker's Edinburgh office. He says: "Unlike farms, sporting estates are valued on the annual records of grouse, stags and salmon, as well as residential and agricultural elements. Capital values have varied enormously since the beginning of the 1980s, from a

low of £7,500 per salmon to a high of £13,000."

Mr Rennie has been seeking offers above £550,000 for the 6,044-acre Tulloch Estate 17 miles east of Fort William in Inverness-shire. The estate, under offer, has some walked-up grouse shooting, with a five-year average of 17.1 brace. Tulloch has three duck ponds. There is rough shooting for woodcock and snipe, trout fishing on the Spean and red deer-stalking. Accommodation includes the main lodge, a farmhouse and two cottages. (Details: 0131-226 2500.)

Robert Frewen of Strutt & Parker's Harrogate office says there is huge variety in the quality of estates. "A Yorkshire estate averaging 1,000 brace of grouse each year over ten years should have a capital value of £3 million, assuming a straight moor purchase with a keeper's cottage," he says. "But buyers should be careful not to pay too much. If there is a huge scope for upgrading a moor which would improve the number of

brace, a buyer could double the capital value of his investment, but one that is efficiently run may not have much scope for capital growth."

A day's shooting in Yorkshire averages between £80 and £100 a brace and most shoots are reserved from year to year. But Mr Frewen has three days of driven grouse shooting available for this season near Pateley Bridge, North Yorkshire. Allow £1,000 a gun a day. "I believe we are in for a good season," he says. (Details: 01423 561274.)

Guy Calbraith of Savills' Edinburgh office quotes £1.8 million for Glentworth Estate, one of Perthshire's best-known grouse moor estates. The grouse moor extends to 4,794 acres of heather hill and provides two separate driven days with a ten-year average annual bag of 400 brace.

There is red deer stalking, a driven hill partridge shoot, snipe and woodcock and four duck flying ponds. The lodge is in the

centre of the estate. (Details: 0131-226 6961.)

Hanging over the market is the fact that, with the proposed ban on fox hunting still on the Government's agenda, there is uncertainty over the future of the sporting estate. Richard Tufnell of Cluttons (0171-408 1010) says: "Pheasant shoots that rely on substantial rearing programmes may be subject to restrictions. Grouse moors could be particularly badly affected by a ban on snares, the main method of controlling foxes."

"An established pheasant shoot might add 5 per cent to the overall value of an estate. Consequently the loss of any value of the shoot in the long term may be offset by movement in value of other elements of the estate, such as the residential."

Finally, Knight Frank quotes £1.7 million for Glenossall Estate, set in 2,500 acres in Sutherland. There is a turried Highland shooting lodge, stalking, grouse shooting, a small pheasant shoot and fishing. (Details: 0131-2258171.)

Be brave – cut out the middleman

Jonathan Prynn
explains how he
bypassed agents

I always used to believe estate agents when they said that private house sales never work out. "It always ends in tears, you know," it was patiently explained to me by the so-called professionals of the property market. But they were wrong. It can be done. I know it can be done, because I have just bought the house of my dreams without an estate agent coming within fibbing distance of my new front door. I have never seen details of the property. I don't know the length of the garden. I don't even know the extent of the "invaluable" storage space. But I don't care. I have my house.

It all started one bleak February day shortly before my girlfriend and I had moved out of our west London flat. OK, we got a good price for our place and it was a warm feeling to have large amounts of cash in our bank account, but that was little compensation for finding ourselves homeless in a competitive housing market.

We had done all the standard stuff — the soul-destroying tour of the estate agents, registering with dozens and viewing what seemed like hundreds of dreary, poky and over-priced properties.

I had not been impressed with the standard of service we were getting. All right, there is a terrible shortage of good property on the market; but these are people's hopes, dreams and homes we are talking about.

Too often, I walked away from estate agents feeling I would have got more attention if I were buying a £500 sofa. But it was not hundreds of pounds at stake, it was hundreds of thousands. Too often the service was offhand, inattentive and, frankly, incompetent.

After several abortive and distressing attempts to buy places we liked the look of, we were beginning to give up hope. We knew the streets we wanted to live in but properties in them never seemed to come on the market or, if they did, we would always be through the door a day late. Somehow, the

agents, however well-briefed, could never get it quite right. A more direct approach was needed. We decided, as a last resort, to put leaflets explaining our interest through the door of every house in the two streets we liked best. For weeks we heard nothing. Meanwhile, an agent had showed us a house that, if not

contacted and valuations given. Our vendor was prepared to offer the house at the lowest of the three prices quoted, and that arrangement seemed more than reasonable to us.

In the weeks that followed, the negotiations went through many of the ups and downs that inevitably dog any property transaction. At times, the deal seemed doomed. But whenever there were problems, and there were many, the vendor and I sorted them out between ourselves — no middleman involved.

To my astonishment, it made life so much easier. Removing the third party also cuts out much of the scope for misunderstanding and distrust.

Perhaps we were lucky. Throughout our transaction, there was never anything other than good will on both sides. There were differences. We wanted a quick completion, they wanted a lengthy one. We wanted them to leave the white goods, they wanted to take them. But at each point of potential conflict, common ground was sought and found.

In part, the very reason we were able to achieve such harmony was the fact that no agents were involved. With agents always sniffing around for extra commission, the threat of gazumping never goes away.

After six hectic and often heart-stopping weeks of negotiation, the deal was done. A month and a half later — nearly five months after we said goodbye to our flat — we were moving in. The local agents had missed out on a five-figure commission.

Tough. We had our house. Not all agents are bad, of course. The ones who sold our flat had been models of professionalism. But after all the countless Charlies and ruthless Ruperts we had had to put up with, I knew that this was the exception.

Far be it from me to put the GTI-driving class out of a job. But if thousands of other fed-up home-buyers are not going to follow the route we took, agents are going to have to wise up.



For your company golf day... it's the business

The Times MeesPierson Corporate Golf Challenge is open to any company, organisation, partnership, association or body (not golf society) based in the British Isles, which holds a business or company golf day in which 12 or more amateur players take part.

How to participate

1. Hold a golf day involving at least 12 players and play under the Standard scoring system.
2. Complete and send the form, together with the registration fee of £200 plus 10% as soon as possible, prior to your golf day and no later than 21st September 1997.
3. After your golf day, simply submit the results of your top scoring players, (with official club handlings) one of whom must be an employee of the registering company.

Golf days registered after 21st September or played after 21st September will be entered for the 1998 Challenge.

Benefits of Entry

- Your golf day featured in The Times "forthcoming golf days" feature list.
- Your golf day results featured in The Times "golf day results" column.
- A set of new personalised event trophies for your golf day winners.
- 25 Copies of The Times delivered to the golf club on the morning of your golf day.
- A golf day commemorative programme for use on your golf day.
- Complimentary copy of the Official event magazine — The Business Golfer.
- Three months free subscription to Golf World magazine.
- If the combined Standard score, (calculated as follows: 1-24 handicaps of the Year leading players is among the top 25 scores in your respective region, they will qualify as a team to play in one of the Northern Regional Finals in October 1997.
- The winning team from each of the Northern Regional Finals will compete in the National Final at Hyatt La Manga Club Resort in Spain in November 1997, to be filmed for a Day TV broadcast.
- The winners of the National Final will be invited to participate in the World Corporate Golf Challenge.

Rules and Conditions

A full set of rules and conditions will be sent with acknowledgement of receipt of registration or you may obtain a copy by calling the Challenge office (details below) or by faxing to 0171 405 7273 (calls cost 45p per minute). This competition is approved by the R & A for payment of expenses "Rule 1-8 Ex. 77A/5A/57".

Further Information

Call the Challenge office on
0171 405 7273 or
0141 221 2225 (Scotland).
or you can access the Internet site on

<http://www.golftoday.co.uk/timescorpgoft/>

Company Registration

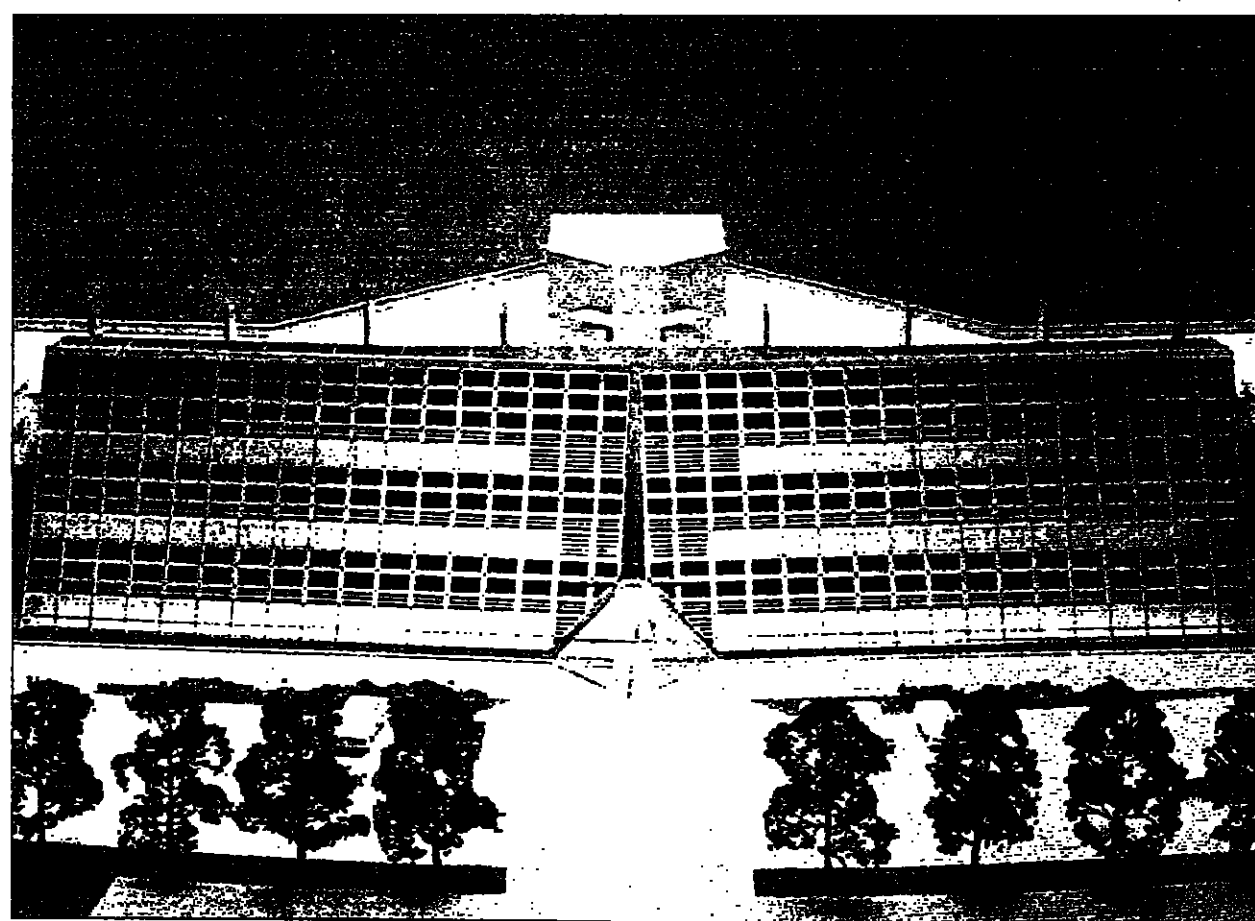
Company Name: _____
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Position: _____
Company Address: _____
Post Code: _____
Telephone: _____
Fax: _____
E-mail: _____
Date of Golf Day: _____
Number of Players: _____
Name of Golf Club: _____

Trophy Requirements

Please list all prizes, trophies, etc. that you intend to award to your top scoring players. (We must be satisfied that the prizes are of a suitable standard.)

Prize 1: _____
Prize 2: _____
Prize 3: _____
Prize 4: _____
Prize 5: _____

Signature: _____
Date: _____



The massive block in Tyne and Wear, which uses 700 sq m of photovoltaic cells to harness the sun's rays

Northern sun will warm the super green office

As Britain makes the best of the sunshine after the wettest June for 177 years, developers are building what is said to be the largest solar-powered office block of its kind in the world.

And it is not on the south coast with its warm climate but in Sunderland, Tyne and Wear. The £5 million building is due to be finished next spring and the developers are hoping to lure healthcare companies, environmental companies or high-profile firms to lease space.

The Y-shaped building, at Duxford business park, will consist of three main parts: workspace, an atrium leading to a solar chimney, and a glazed carapace encasing the 700 sq m of photovoltaic cells, which will convert the sun's rays to electric power.

Mark Glumman, founder of Akeler Developments, which is building the 37,700 sq ft building, says: "We get a very good amount of sunlight in this area. The solar panels perform better here than in some parts of the Mediterranean, such as Greece." The Mer Office in London says:

**Eve-Ann Prentice on
what will be
probably the biggest
solar-heated office
block in the world**

sunshine a year on average, or 30 per cent of the sunshine possible in the daylight hours available. The region gets a mere 35 hours of sun in December and 179 in May — Tyne-side's sunniest month.

The building will cost £1.5 million more than a traditional office building, but this amount has been provided in a grant from the European Development Fund, with Akeler paying the remaining £3.6 million. Companies that lease office space at about £13 a square foot — the going rate for the Duxford business park — can, however, expect to make immediate savings in energy costs of up to 70 per

"There will be generous rent-free periods, regional assistance and companies could get DTI help," Mr Glumman says.

The heart of the building contains the tetrahedron-shaped atrium, which leads to the solar chimney. Warm air is drawn out of the building in summer, but is reclaimed and used to help to heat it in winter. The photovoltaic cells can produce enough energy to run 300 personal computers and enough energy will be generated each year — 55,000 kWh — to run the equivalent of 16 medium-size homes. In short, solar power will provide up to a third of the building's energy needs.

CORRECTION

• The estate agent handling the sale of the penthouse that belonged to the late Sir Laurens van der Post (Homes, July 30) is John D. Wood of Chelsea Green, London SW3 3QS; telephone 0171-352 1484.

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The continuing expansion of our global operations and the relocation abroad of the incumbent have created the need for two assistants to work closely with the Director of Global IT & Contract Teams and the Head of Operations respectively.

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- the maturity to 'hold the fort' during the directors' absences and ability to complete their own projects.

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We would be particularly interested in hearing from individuals with experience of a dealing room environment, banking or another fast-paced commercial organisation.

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PA TO MANAGING DIRECTOR

Pringle of Scotland, the prestigious knitwear company, is seeking a high calibre candidate for this position. Based in our London office, you would also be required to act as Office Manager.

Using your excellent organisational skills, your responsibility will include diary management, organising meetings, drafting correspondence and arranging travel.

You will be confident and assertive with a high level of initiative and a mature outlook. In addition, you will have excellent interpersonal and communication skills and the ability to deal with confidential matters.

The role will demand fast, accurate shorthand and keyboard skills (Amipro).

In return we can offer a salary in the region of £20-24K together with contributory pension scheme and 25 days holiday.

Please send your cv and covering letter to Lynn Clark, Pringle of Scotland Ltd, 12a Saville Row, London W1X 2LX.

London office of a major US Law firm currently aggressively expanding its business in the UK seeks candidates for the following positions

SECRETARY TO SENIOR PARTNER

In addition to providing secretarial assistance to one of the senior partners, you will ensure that smooth running of the office.

You will have excellent interpersonal skills and the ability to deal with confidential matters in a tactful, discreet and diplomatic manner.

LEGAL EXECUTIVE

Graduate calibre with proven track record gained in a similar environment. Experience in on-the-job legal research essential.

SWEDISH MOTHER TONGUE SECRETARY

You will provide secretarial support to the Swedish partner. Some German preferred and Russian also helpful.

RECEPTIONIST/SECRETARY

A good all rounder willing to undertake a variety of general office duties. You will have a professional telephone manner and enthusiastic disposition.

REQUIREMENTS

US/UK Law Firm Experience

Strong IT skills (MS Office)

Good Communication skills

Be flexible and highly motivated

The Human resources department, 4th Floor, 68 Pall Mall, LONDON, SW1Y 5FS.

Instead of working your way to the top, why not start there?

Assistant to Chief Exec.

c. £20K +

We could have called this a job for a PA. But that would have given the wrong impression about the job itself and the kind of people we believe are best equipped to do it.

Certainly, we're looking for someone who can be a real right hand to the Chief Executive of one of the world's great pharmaceutical companies - a company that's active in everything from transplants to asthma, from Alzheimer's disease to cardiovascular drugs.

But, while excellent keyboard and graphics skills (including Microsoft Office) are a basic qualification, we're not necessarily looking for someone who has worked their way up through the traditional secretarial ranks. What we really need is someone who is highly intelligent, articulate and confident dealing with all kinds of people, who's organised and focused in their approach to work, and who's more than capable of

handling not only day-to-day admin to help our Chief Exec work to maximum effectiveness, but also a range of ad hoc business assignments. As a European company with group offices in Basle, knowledge of either French or German would also be extremely useful.

So the question is, what kind of person could offer those kinds of skills? One answer could well be a recent graduate who's looking for an unconventional start to a business career, and who could handle the challenge of going straight into the heart of a big, sophisticated, successful enterprise. And, of course, another answer could be a highly experienced, extraordinarily capable PA.

Either way, we've a lot to offer you even beyond the obvious challenges and attractions of the job itself. You'd get five weeks holiday just to start with, a pension scheme, the option of private healthcare.

Wherever you're coming from, this job gives you the chance to get straight to where you want to be - the top. Send your cv, with a covering letter to Sue Taunton, HR Executive, Novartis Pharmaceuticals UK Ltd, Frimley Business Park, Frimley, Camberley, Surrey GU16 5SG.



VERSATILE PA TO OWNER/DIRECTOR

VICTORIA c£30,000+ package (inc. overtime & bonus)

The business interests include a growing restaurant company, and an international project financial advisory business, with a small-6 person head office team.

The position encompasses a variety of tasks, e.g. diary and sophisticated word processing and presentations, dealing with different cultures, shifting priorities, the full range of PA functions, and office organisation and filing. There is pressure, tight deadlines, a 47 hour week plus some late evening and weekend work.

You must be an experienced PA with first class MS Win95/W4W 6 and shorthand skills (60/100). A levels, highly computer literate with Powerpoint/DTP skills, and relevant large and small company experience. You should be well organised, calm, and a team player with energy, commitment and flexibility.

If you can meet all these requirements please fax letter demonstrating this, and full CV including present salary, to Mr. R. Mathrani, Vanguard Capital on 0171 584 8595

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We are seeking two proactive computer literate secretaries/admin assistants to provide comprehensive support for four of our Directors. These are two separate roles, one involved in the area of Social research and the other in Marketing and Consumer Research. Excellent administrative and organisational skills, and the ability to work well under pressure are essential.

Secretary/Personnel Assistant

We are looking for an experienced secretary who is computer literate, with strong personnel, administrative and secretarial skills, to provide support to our Personnel Director. Knowledge of spreadsheets and database management is essential. This is a busy and interesting role, with plenty of scope for development.

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All these roles require a knowledge of Microsoft Office and are based in Southwark.

Please write with your CV to Rosie Packer, MORI, 95 Southwark Street, London, SE1 0HX, or e-mail rosiepacker@mori.com

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Salary £19,250 Regent's Park, London

The Prince's Youth Business Trust helps 18-30 year olds who are unemployed, under employed or of limited means, to set up their own business by providing finance, on-going business advice and marketing opportunities. The Chief Executive's office provides strategic support to the Trust's operations in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and liaises closely with the other members of The Prince's Trust.

You will play a key role in ensuring that the Chief Executive can operate with maximum efficiency within a wide network of contacts inside and outside the organisation. We are looking for someone with superlative skills and at least two years' experience of providing secretarial and administrative support at a senior level, including servicing meetings, making travel arrangements and organising diaries.

You will need excellent communication and interpersonal skills, tact, initiative and the ability to manage and prioritise a wide variety of tasks.

For an application pack write to Louise Farrow, The Prince's Youth Business Trust, 18 Park Square East, London NW1 4UH (Fax 0171 543 1342) E-mail: louise.farrow@princes-trust.org.uk. CVs will not be accepted. Closing date for completed application forms 18th August 1997. Interviews to be held on 27th August 1997.

The Prince's Youth Business Trust aims to be an equal opportunities employer.



Under the boss's wing

Joan Llewelyn Owens sees how the rise in mentoring schemes for secretaries is helping to boost their status

Part of Christine Gibbons' role as administrative and clerical consultant to the Southampton Community Health NHS Trust is to act as a mentor. "I have mentored three secretaries over the last 12 months," she says, "and others on an ad hoc basis whenever a more objective view is needed."

"Mentoring for secretaries is increasing," says Freda Gardiner, who chairs the Secretarial Development Network. "It is particularly useful when a new secretary joins an organisation."

"If you don't know anyone except your immediate boss you can feel very lost. With an experienced secretary to turn to, life is much easier. Also, existing staff can learn a lot by teaching and mentoring."

One of the latest organisations to start a mentoring scheme is the University of Bristol. Kerstin Mussell, staff development adviser, says

they have no set career structure for secretaries and no system of appraisal.

Some of the secretaries working for academics who are out of their offices a great deal, are very isolated. "We felt mentoring by other secretaries would help them to clarify their ideas and offer them a way to talk about the problems which might be causing stress."

The Industrial Society publication *Managing Best Practice - Mentoring* states: "At its broadest, mentoring is a relationship in which an individual uses a more experienced, usually more senior person, as a sounding board and for guidance."

Marjory Mair of the Industrial Society, feels strongly that senior secretaries should be mentoring juniors, harnessing their potential and helping to raise the professional profile of secretaries.

She believes, along with

Carol Burnett, PA to the managing director of Allied Bakeries, that some colleges omit to teach secretarial students how to handle certain situations, possibly because the tutors may not have worked in an office for some time. Experienced mentors can help to remedy this.

The mentoring system introduced by Ms Burnett is informal. She came to it after monthly meetings with her secretaries, where she found they spent most of the time moaning.

"When they said they wanted to be more involved in their jobs, Ms Burnett told them they must display interest, ask their bosses how meetings have gone and what decisions have been made - in fact, ask if they can attend meetings themselves. But they said they wouldn't know how to go about it."

Since then, Ms Burnett has made a point of sitting down with other secretaries and

when required. She has encouraged them to put pressure on their bosses to include them in meetings. "When managers are reluctant to do this," she says, "I have given them a nudge and said, 'It is part of the girl's progression. She has to have her career path, just as you have yours.'"

Ms Burnett watches over newcomers, and gives tips on how to organise their offices. She advises on their career path and makes sure they have one, because she prefers to promote from existing staff rather than appoint people from outside.

"The key to good mentoring," she says, "is to be seen to be interested in others, their problems and their progress. You have to be a good listener, and you must not patronise."

Mentors must also be able to put the sort of questions which encourage people to talk and to think for themselves. Mentoring is not confined to secretaries. At De Laitte Consulting, every new recruit, regardless of grade or area of work, is allocated a mentor. After the first three months, the newcomer is welcome to

choose another mentor. "It gives people very quick insight into how a firm's organisation and hierarchy work and is very good for settling someone in a new job," says Caroline Maundling who set up the system.

Pamela Ollerhead, PA to John Everett, managing partner at De Laitte, has been both a mentee and a mentor.

Her colleague, Jacqui Dove, secretary to the senior partner in one of De Laitte's consulting groups, chose a senior manager as her mentor. "I chose someone who knew the organisation well and could think things through clearly. It is a non-threatening environment because he is not someone I report to and it is totally confidential."

It is a rule here that we don't have a mentor anyone who can influence our progress through the firm. It is good to have someone who can spare the time to have a chat to you. And that is essential. Mentors are impartial advisers, who don't necessarily come up with the answer to a problem, but help their charges to work it out for themselves.

Senior staff are making office life easier for the new recruits

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Pooling their skills: PAs Pamela Ollerhead and Jacqui Dove have benefited from being both mentor and mentee

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Look of opportunity for the right person.

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RUGBY UNION: TWICKENHAM STAGES DIGNIFIED DEPARTURE OF SECRETARY

Hallett makes a peaceful exit

By MARK SOUSTER

FOR Tony Hallett, it was indeed High Noon. At midday yesterday, the secretary of the Rugby Football Union (RFU) strode into a conference room at Twickenham and confirmed that he was resigning. The man who had been branded the bad guy by opponents had succeeded in the shock-out and, once the gunsmoke had cleared, only Cliff Brittle had been left standing.

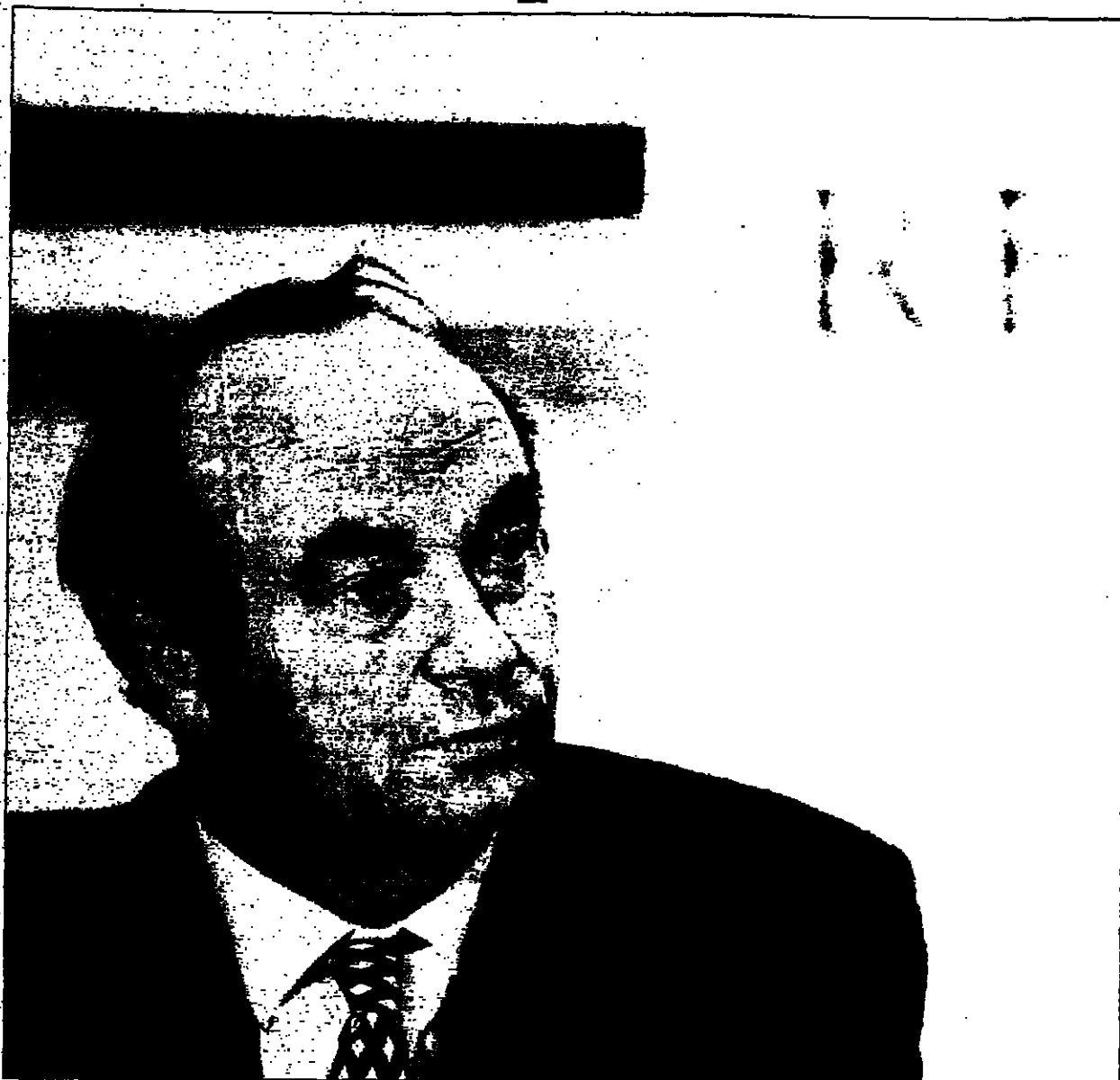
Hallett put on a bravura performance. So, too, did Brittle, the chairman of the union's management board, but then, he could afford to. There was no hint of the rancour that had soured relations between the two during the past 20 months of political infighting. Sitting beside each other, they put aside their differences and talked instead of their mutual admiration.

Brittle said how much Hallett would be missed, which begged the question as to why he was going. How the new Twickenham would be his lasting legacy, how there would always be a welcome for him at the RFU. Yes, there had been differences of opinion over policy and roles, but it had never been personal. Hallett was offered effusive thanks for his efforts over the past two difficult years and promised tickets for life.

For his part, Hallett remained dignified. Yes, he was sad to be leaving but the game, and its unity and integrity, were bigger than any one individual. "I am leaving with a clear conscience and with the RFU, I believe, in good order. I believe it is fundamental that there be unity amongst those charged with running the game... I have therefore decided that for the benefit of the game I should leave rather than appear to prolong the discord," he said.

The search for a successor to Hallett, who has been paid compensation and will leave within a week, begins immediately. The replacement will have the title of chief executive and should be in place within three to six months. Brittle was insistent that Hallett's departure marked a new beginning and that the internecine squabbling was a thing of the past.

Asked about the position of Jack Rowell as England coach, Brittle said that "people underestimate his [Rowell's] chances of retaining the job". Despite the widespread feeling that a change is needed, Rowell may indeed stay in place through to the 1999 World Cup, if only because of the lack of an outstanding



Farewell performance: Hallett faces the media at Twickenham yesterday to announce his resignation

successor who could be prised away from his club at this late stage without massive compensation having to be paid. Possible successors who have been sounded out include Ian McGeechan, Richard Hill, Clive Woodward and

Rob Smith. At a meeting attended by five members of the national playing committee at the East India Club two weeks ago, under the chairmanship of Bill Beaumont, it was agreed that the contractual commitments of each

should be investigated. McGeechan remains the favourite with some but he has also been approached recently by the Scottish Rugby Union about a possible coaching role at Murrayfield combined with his existing commitments at

Northampton, where he has a six-year contract. McGeechan's acceptance of any RFU offer could also be dependant upon him being guaranteed a bigger role, such as Director of Rugby, in the future.

Hill, who has transformed Gloucester, is preferred by others but the likelihood of Graham Henry, of Auckland, being invited to succeed Rowell is remote. It is felt that John Mitchell, of Sale, would be a better option and he will be invited to coach England A this autumn.

No decision on Rowell's future will be taken until the end of August, but the longer the saga drags on the better his chances of staying put — should he still want to. One source said: "You don't close the door [on Rowell] unless another one is open and the chances of that happening before the season starts are dramatically reducing."

Townsend considers a move

GREGOR TOWNSEND will decide by the end of next week whether to leave Northampton (Mark Souster writes). Townsend yesterday spent two hours with Ian McGeechan, the director of rugby at the club, discussing his future and has not ruled out the possibility of staying at Franklin's Gardens.

However, it appears likely that, with Northampton unable to guarantee him the stand-off role he covets, he will move to either Richmond or Cardiff. Both have their advantages for Townsend, the British Isles stand-off in South Africa. Cardiff offer him the chance to play in the European Cup, while Richmond will be in the first division next season and his girlfriend is moving to London in the autumn

for six months. "It's how I feel about the club and which I feel will be best for my development as a player," Townsend said yesterday. Cardiff have offered him a three-year contract worth a reputed £500,000.

Auckland, the Super 12 champions, are set to buy a large stake in Blackheath, the second division London club, which has money problems. An announcement is expected later this week.

Vernon Pugh, who has chaired the Welsh Rugby Union's general committee for four years, has decided not to seek re-election as WRU chairman. He will continue in the post for an interim period of one month until the new chairman is elected in September.

BOWLS

Yorkshire bloom as Alderson runs riot

By DAVID RYAN JONES

IF THE Britain in Bloom judges, who visited Royal Leamington Spa last week, had popped into Victoria Park yesterday, they would surely have been impressed with the white roses of Yorkshire, for whom everything in the garden was lovely. Eight of the 24 players who helped Yorkshire win the six-rink John's Trophy on Monday, stayed on to win the Walker Cup, awarded annually to the winners of the women's national double rink championship.

Beryl Alderson, who has played for England indoors since 1987, but has failed to garner enough points from national appearances to gain a place in the outdoor side, was outstanding. After skipping her rink to a fine 19-17 win over Mary Price, of Buckinghamshire, in the semi-final, Alderson ran riot after lunch, steering Ann Colley, Janet Hague and June Foster to a 30-13 victory over Pat Hallam. Jean Pinder, skipping the other rink, was in fine form, too. With good support from Dot Kennedy, Barbara Stokes and Pat Napier, she forced a creditable 16-16 tie with Lynne Thelwell in the semi-finals, and eased to a 22-14 win over Janet Green in the final.

In Stratford-upon-Avon, the local club had something to celebrate. Nine years after being moved out of their club premises by their landlords, the Royal Shakespeare Company, they were hosting an international event. The club found a farmer who granted them a piece of land three miles out of town for the nominal rent of a crate of whisky a year.

Yesterday, their green was praised by the leading young players of England and Australia, as they contested the first of three international matches, using an attractive new six-a-side format. The teams play two triples matches in the morning, three pairs in the afternoon and six singles in the evening, and the first session, in which the sides shared the honours, held the promise of a tight series.

Ian Bond's triple won for England, and Brett Duprez's squared it for Australia, before, with one win each in the pairs, a single shot victory for Wayne Cheeseman and Bond over Garry Willis and Tom Ellem tipped the balance England's way.

Wacky ruses that always sell sport short

SIMON BARNES



Midweek View

There are times when a journalist must stand up and be counted. When a serious injustice is brought to his attention, it is a journalist's job to tell the world. So let the campaign start here. Justice for Penelope Pistor.

Ms Pistor, the driver of the Compact Pussycat, won on a magnificent four occasions in the 34 episodes of the Hanna-Barbera cartoon series Wacky Races. But the Wacky Races championship, if calculated by the points system used in Formula One motor racing, leaves her in fifth place. This is surely not right — totally unfair, ridiculous. In fact one begins to wonder if we are talking about serious sport at all.

These important figures, worked out by a chap called Graham Smith and communicated to the Daily Mail, make extraordinary reading. The overall champions are the Stag Brothers. Rock and Gravel, in the Boulder Mobile, who only won three times, but made up ground with eight second-place finishes.

This is roughly what happened in grand prix racing in 1987, when Nelson Piquet's collection of second places gave him the championship over the win-or-bust style of Nigel Mansell. One has to wonder about a system that rewards second-best over a winner. Are we talking sporting excellence? Or are we talking about stringing along as many people for as long as possible in the name of rather spurious entertainment?

As you would expect, there is a difference between real sport and the Wacky Races. The Wacky Races are much more sensible. Let us look at the world club championship in the sport of rugby league. This began as an excellent idea: the best of the Australasian clubs against the best of Europe.

Penrith Panthers, of Australia, won all six of their matches in the qualifying stage of the competition. You can't really do better than that. Bradford Bulls lost all six of theirs, and you can't do a lot worse. Guess which team qualified for the quarter-finals? Correct: Bradford Bulls. Further point in their six matches, Penrith scored 256 points. St Helens, still in the competition, scored 96.

The reason for these anomalies is that the draw was rigged in order to get four teams from each hemisphere into the quarter-finals. In sporting terms, you can see the point, but the competition had been built around the search for television audiences, rather than the serious quest for sporting excellence. Sport looks rather silly as a result.

We do not have to look very far to find further examples of the Wacky Races Syndrome. Look at the European Cup Champions' League. The search for excellence has been disastrously compromised this season, as the competition, while retaining the same name, becomes the champions and runners-up league.

Even last year, the competition had enough anomalies to be going on with. Manchester United reached the semi-finals, despite losing three times. They lost five times in the competition altogether. Get as many big teams as possible, get them to play as many matches as possible, and count your money. Sporting audiences are fools — they will watch anything. Or perhaps the idea is to make as much money as possible before the dread day comes, when sporting people realise that they are being taken for suckers.

That day comes ever closer. Take the last cricket World Cup. It involved 12 teams, playing in two groups. There were 30 games scheduled in order to winnow them down to eight. The teams that were eliminated could have been picked out from the start: United Arab Emirates, Holland, Kenya and Zimbabwe. The systems are so absurd that Australia and West Indies didn't even bother to play two of their games, and still qualified.

Meanwhile, the football World Cup gets more and more silly. The last competition went through the two-week group stage to reduce 24 teams to 16. Did we get proper football after that? No, because the penalty shoot-out came in. Football has reached a point when the group stage is largely bogus, and so is the knockout stage. Never mind. Sporting audiences lap it up.

Increasingly, though, we walk away unsatisfied. What people seek from sport is the quest for excellence, the quest for true. Not because we are all sporting purists, but because the true struggle for excellence and victory is the most exciting thing that television can bring.

If victory does not truly matter to the participants, then the audience is left unsatisfied and, in the end, we will go elsewhere. Increasingly, the great symbiosis of sport and television is selling us alcohol-free lager while claiming that it is the real thing. Night after night we drink our 20 pints and find ourselves still standing, and we are just beginning to ask a few questions about the stuff we have been consuming.

Dick Dastardly and Muttley did not win a single one of the Wacky Races but I get the sneaking feeling that they have taken over the management of professional sport.

SHEEHAN on BRIDGE

By ROBERT SHEEHAN, BRIDGE CORRESPONDENT

Whether to double or bid on is often a difficult decision. But it was not the case on today's hand.

Dealer South Game all N-S-40 Rubber bridge

♠ A85	♥ A876	♦ A	♣ K92
♠ J1076	♥ Q	♦ K	♣ J3
♠ QJ4	♥ K92	♦ A	♣ K10542
♠ 72	♥ AK932	♦ J763	♣ 10763
	♥ K10542	♦ KQ1084	♣ 5
	♥ A98	♦ A	♣ A98

S	W	N	E
Pass	1D	Pass	1NT
2H	3C	3H	5C
Pass	Pass	5H	Double
All Pass			

Contract: Five Hearts doubled, by South. Lead: ace of diamonds.

West was the Australian expert Bob Richmond. I was South. Note that after my intervention with Two Hearts over East's 1NT response, West's bid of Three Clubs was not strong — it was just competing the partnership. I discussed this point at some length in a recent Weekend column.

Clearly North had to bid Three Hearts. Now East's hand began to look good. If his partner had a singleton heart, all East's high cards were in the right places. Nevertheless, I don't think his hand was worth more than Four Clubs. Maybe he realised the mess of the auction North-South were about to make.

By most objective standards my pass of Five Clubs was impeccable. But I was playing

with a keen but inexperienced player, one of whose many weaknesses is to bid on too much. For that reason I should have doubled Five Clubs.

When Five Clubs went back to North he made a poor bid. He has excellent defence — two aces and good control of diamonds, and possibilities of scoring the queen of clubs. In addition, as South was not able to open the bidding, making eleven tricks in hearts was unlikely. I score Double at 10 out of 10. Pass at 7 and Five Hearts at 0. Best defence takes Five Clubs two off; I was lucky to escape for one off in Five Hearts.

Robert Sheehan writes on bridge Monday to Friday in Sport and in the Weekend section on Saturday.

KEENE on CHESS

By RAYMOND KEENE, CHESS CORRESPONDENT

Favourites through

Early play in the Smith & Williamson British Chess Championship at Hove saw the favourites by and large power through. Particularly impressive was Jon Speelman's spectacular win against Charles Cobb.

Among those top players who failed to make their mark were former British champions Tony Miles and Matthew Sadler, who drew respectively with Rokim and Walker.

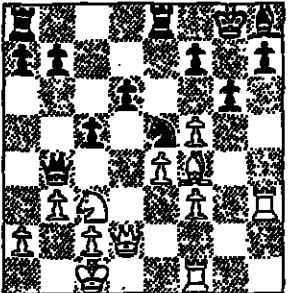
White: Jon Speelman
Black: Charles Cobb
British Championship, August 1997

Queen's Indian Defence	White	Black
1 d4	Nf6	
2 Nf3	e6	
3 g3	b6	
4 Bg2	Bb7	
5 c4	e7	
6 Qd2	Qc7	
7 Nd2	Ne4	
8 Bc2	is	
9 e5	Bf8	
10 Re1	Ne5	
11 Be1	Nec5	
12 Nc4	Nec3	
13 Bxc3	e5	
14 Nd5	Bg5	
15 f4	Rd5	
16 Qc2	Rf8	
17 f5	Qd6	
18 B4	Nd6	
19 Bd2	Qd5	
20 Bf3	Qd6	
21 Be4	Ch5	
22 Rf3	d6	
23 Rf1	fxd3	
24 Bxd3	Qh3	
25 Bg4	Ch5	
26 Bf5	Kf8	
27 Be6	e5	
28 Rf7	Qae2	

WINNING MOVE

By Raymond Keene

White to play. This position is from the game Emms - Summerscale, Drury Lane 1997. Can you calculate the powerful sequence by which White smashed open his opponent's kingside?



HOCKEY

Lawrie inspires Scots

SCOTLAND stayed in the hunt for qualification for the World Cup finals with a 1-1 draw against New Zealand in pool B of the qualifying tournament in Harare.

Alison Grant gave Scotland an eleventh-minute lead but Robin Matthews equalised in the 55th minute to give New Zealand a deserved draw. Grant steered in Sue Fraser's shot from Scotland's only penalty corner.

The Scots gave a controlled defensive performance as New Zealand enjoyed the ma-

IN BRIEF

Krajicek's power is irresistible

RICHARD KRAJICEK, the Wimbledon champion last year, had no trouble in disposing of this year's runner-up, Cedric Pioline, of France, on the opening night of the ATP championships in Cincinnati. The Dutchman, seeded No 12, secured victory 6-3, 6-4.

The ninth seed, Marcelo Rios, of Chile, completed a 6-3, 7-5 win over Jonas Bjorkman, of Sweden.

Swimming: If Erik de Bruin refuses to attend a hearing of the executive board of the European Swimming League over a false identity claim, then his wife, Michelle Smith, the triple Olympic champion, whom he coaches, may not defend her European titles in Seville this month.

Motorsport: Kenneth Eriksson, of Sweden, won the New Zealand rally for the first time yesterday after his nearest rival, Carlos Sainz, of Spain, hit a sheep on the opening stage of the day. Rugby: John Bentley, the injured England rugby union wing, is likely to miss four weeks of the Stanes Super League and the start of the union season.

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- LAT**
a. A latrine
b. A column
c. A strip of board
- MOTMOT**
a. An epigram
b. A bird
c. Hurry up!
- LITERATA**
a. Writings
b. A literary lady
c. Facts

Answers on page 41

Solution on page 41

ECB chairman unveils radical restructuring plans aimed at improving all levels of the game

MacLaurin sets new standard for cricket

BY ALAN LEE
CRICKET CORRESPONDENT

A REFORMED county championship building to September play-offs, smaller county staffs and a streamlined one-day structure are the most eye-catching proposals in the strategic plan for cricket unveiled at Lord's yesterday by the chairman of the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), Lord MacLaurin of Knebworth.

It is behind the shop window, however, at the neglected lower levels of the game, that the long-awaited report of Lord MacLaurin and his chief executive, Tim Lamb, will make its most significant impact. At long last, there will be a realistic conveyor belt from recreational to professional cricket, theoretically overcoming the disinclination of pursuing the game as a career.

A negative response to the blueprint would be cheap and easy. By the admission of Lord MacLaurin himself "it is not ideal" and the proposed three-division championship is, at first glance, so original as to be bewildering. It will also seem curious that the volume of domestic one-day cricket is to be increased rather than decreased.

However, considering the constraints of player welfare and passionate parochial demands within the professional circuit, the county programme recommended is attractive and ingenious, while the improvements to the feeder systems have enormous merit.

Certainly, no one can accuse Lord MacLaurin and Lamb of complacency in their research or of amateurism in their approach. Their presentation of the document, entitled *Raising the Standards*, was slick and dramatic. Their words were polished and pointed.

"There is no quick fix when it comes to addressing the issues of cricket," Lord MacLaurin said. "We have to build from the foundations up and changing the structure alone is not enough. We have to raise the standards of management and coaching. We need to be more professional and disciplined."

Lamb went further, spelling out to the county delegates, on whom the plan will stand or fall, the consequences of rejection. "Football is capturing the

Raising the Standard

The ECB Management Board Blueprint for the Future Playing Structure of Cricket

THE MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- County championship divided into three equal conferences with end-of-season play-offs, starting 1998
- One-day competitions to be reduced from three to two in 1999
- Sunday League and Benson and Hedges Cup to be scrapped in 1999, replaced by National League, a two-division 50-overs competition with promotion and relegation
- NatWest Trophy to become the FA Cup of cricket expanded to 60 clubs with minor sides guaranteed home draw against first-class counties
- Counties encouraged to reduce their playing staffs, probably to a maximum of 25
- Second XI and Minor Counties cricket to be merged into 38-team championship by the year 2000
- Oxford and Cambridge Universities to retain first-class status next year but with warning over their standards
- A network of premier leagues for club players
- More practice time between matches for county players
- One overseas player per county to remain
- Central contracting of England players deferred
- More one-day internationals in England, up to maximum of seven per year



middle classes," he said. "We are in danger of becoming a minor spectator sport."

This was a stark warning from a man who has spent the past year in a massive process of consultation at all levels of the game. He knew, from early in the assignment, that the popular panacea of a two-division championship, with promotion and relegation, would founder on the rocks of timid, reactionary counties. From then on, it was a case of finding a formula that embraced appreciable change and sensitivity.

Where the championship is

ship against county one-day events.

These, at long last, are to be reduced from three to two. The Board is contracted to stage one further year of the Benson and Hedges Cup but it will then be abolished. The Sunday league, in its present form, will also cease to exist in 1999.

Instead, finishing positions in the Sunday league next year will dictate the divisions for a new National League. This will be played over the globally accepted 50-overs span, rather than the derided 40, and it will not be restricted to a specific day of the week.

now the Minor Counties and second XIs of first-class sides. Two qualifying rounds involving the minnows will produce 14 teams to join the senior counties in the third round, at which point the non first-class sides will, gratifyingly, be guaranteed a home draw.

By 2000, it is envisaged that the minor counties and second XI championships will be phased out and replaced by a single tournament involving 38 Board teams — a more authentic link between club and county cricket and a means to the end of reducing county staffs.

At university level, Oxford and Cambridge are to retain their first-class status for at least one more season and, depending on performance, could even be joined by other deserving universities in a league tournament.

Club cricket is to be encouraged to form elite groups of clubs, geographically linked, into premier leagues — a proposal that is bound to meet resistance from the jealously guarded existing leagues in Lancashire and Yorkshire.

Age-group cricket will focus on under-17s, at which level two-day, one-innings games are to be encouraged, and an extension of the Kwik Cricket principle into senior schools is also envisaged as one more part of the most comprehensive and impressive structural plan ever presented. Cricket must embrace it, or forever rue the consequences.

'There is no quick fix when it comes to addressing the issues of cricket'

concerned, the outcome is plainly a halfway house. The conference system, in which each group of six does not play games against each other, may seem illogical but Lamb believes it has a number of virtues, not least the guaranteed preservation of 18 counties, when the weakest might conceivably have gone to the wall in the more hostile world of two fluid divisions.

Local derbies will also be preserved, and there is considerable appeal in the September play-offs to decide placings from one to 18. Prize-money is to be substantially improved, certainly enough to maintain the primacy of the champion-

Controversially, the blueprint proposes that each county will play 25 National League games — two against each side in their own division and one against each in the other. This is a blatant marketing ploy, balancing the acknowledged fact that championship cricket must be run at a loss with the requirement to raise money from television rights. In this aim, at least, the format should succeed.

A single knockout tournament will operate from 1999 and Lamb suggested it would become the FA Cup of cricket. There will be 60 teams involved, including what are



Pointing the way: Lord MacLaurin outlines his proposals at Lord's yesterday

Omens look good for Glamorgan title hopes

BY SIMON WILDE

FOR all the talk of the closeness of the race for the Britannic Assurance county championship — and it is close — and the scope for teams to rise swiftly up the table, recent history suggests that Glamorgan, the leaders, are in a strong position. In three of the four years since the competition switched exclusively to four-day matches, the team leading the table in the first week in August has held on to win the title.

The only champions to be trailing at this stage were Warwickshire, when they won the second of their back-to-back titles in 1995. On August 7, they were 22 points behind Northamptonshire but possessed a game in hand that they put to good use a fortnight later, though they did not in fact move to the top until the last day of the month.

Now, Glamorgan hold a ten-point lead over their nearest rivals, but there are likely to be one or two twists yet before the race is run as the Welsh county, who last won the championship under Tony Lewis in 1969, are not involved

TABLE

	P	W	L	D	Bt	Bf	Pts
Glamorgan (10)	11	5	1	5	29	35	159
Gloucestershire (13)	11	5	3	3	24	37	147
Kent (14)	11	4	3	4	29	40	145
Essex (5)	11	4	3	4	29	40	145
Warwickshire (8)	11	4	2	5	20	31	132
Leics (1)	12	2	0	10	28	40	130
Middlesex (9)	10	4	3	3	17	39	123
Worcestershire (16)	11	4	3	4	29	40	145
Lancashire (15)	11	3	4	4	23	30	113
Worce (7)	10	2	2	6	23	37	110
Surrey (3)	11	2	3	6	24	31	105
Hampshire (14)	10	2	3	5	17	29	92
Northants (18)	11	2	4	5	14	33	94
Durham (18)	11	2	4	5	14	33	94
Derbyshire (2)	11	0	6	5	15	40	70
Sussex (12)	11	0	6	5	15	40	70

(1996 positions in brackets)
□ Gloucestershire's record includes eight points as side batting last in match where scores finished level

In the round of matches that start today, they will watch with interest the progress of the chasing pack, only one of whom, Middlesex, who are a distant eighth, have a game in hand on them.

Matthew Maynard's team also have one of the easier runs, having already played five of the leading six sides. Only Yorkshire, who have risen to fifth with efficient performances against Durham and Northamptonshire, but also do not play today, have a comparable finish.

Kent and Essex, meanwhile, have each to play three of their rivals, starting today when they meet at Canterbury in what is undoubtedly the match of the round. Kent will be without Headley and Essex without Hussain, both involved with England.

Of the others, Gloucestershire can return to the top with a comprehensive victory over a thinly resourced Somerset at Taunton, while Warwickshire, fresh from their rout of Sussex, travel to Blackpool to tackle Lancashire. Oster is expected to open for Warwickshire in the absence of the injured Knight and Moles.

Atherton prepares in private

BY IVO TENNANT

MICHAEL ATHERTON, the England captain, had an hour-long private net at Trent Bridge yesterday with his predecessor, Graham Gooch. Now working as a selector, Gooch had been invited to practise with the players by David Lloyd. "After all, he has some time on his hands now he has retired," the coach said.

The other England players joined them later, although Darren Gough, who has a sore knee, confined himself to batting. He will have a fitness test today, but is expected to be fit for the fifth Test against Australia, which starts tomorrow. All 13 members of the

party are being retained until then. David Graveney, the chairman of selectors, concurred with the Australians' estimation that this is likely to be the best pitch of the series.

Both Hollis and Gooch will make their Test debuts. "If I believe my own press I will be going down the wrong channel," Adam said. "To some extent we are coming into the match cold as the rule in the pavilion at Surrey is that there is no television during the hours of play. So we have not seen much of the series so far." His younger brother, Ben, added: "I could not imagine making

my debut in a bigger situation."

Australia will field an unchanged side. Mark Taylor's back injury having improved after a few days' rest, Steve Waugh, the vice-captain, said that England's decision to play both Hollis and Gooch was a bold one. "They have been picked for their attitude and temperament more than anything. Ben is obviously not ruffled by pressure," he said.

Shane Warne would not comment on his negotiations to play county cricket next year, but he is thought to have received at least one offer of more than £100,000.

Perfect grip is schoolboy stuff

THE idea of a bat rubber that can be moulded to the individual grip is so straightforward that it is hard to imagine it was conceived as part of a school project. After a series of tests, it is now on the market and Neil Smith, the Warwickshire all-rounder who is endorsing the product, believes it can also assist in coaching.

He was approached by Stuart Sanderson, a former colleague at Leamington Cricket Club, whose son was responsible for the idea. The rubber is rolled on to the handle, heated until it changes colour and gripped by the batsman to leave an imprint that remains on cooling.

Smith said: "I found originally that the ridges between the finger holds were too big and restrictive, but now I am using a thinner rubber and it is extremely comfortable. On our coaching courses over the winter we do 90 minutes on grip, stance and backlift, but that gets forgotten when the kids go away. With the handle moulded to the correct grip it is no longer a problem."

chief executive, said. However, Peter Anderson, his counterpart at Somerset, said: "We have 600 seats in front of the pavilion and we feel our members should be able to use them for the Sunday game." Gloucester say that they are unlikely to reciprocate when Somerset visit next season.

Running story

A hand-written, 1,000-word account by Michael Atherton of his match-saving unbeaten 188 against South Africa in 1995 is up for sale. Proceeds will be split between Atherton's benefit fund and the pavilion restoration appeal at Hinton Charterhouse Cricket Club, near Bath.

Trevor Vennett-Smith, an auctioneer specialising in sporting memorabilia, said: "I think Atherton pieces will be considered highly collectable in the future, because he is the longest-serving England captain and, in particular, this refers to one of the greatest defensive innings in Test history. In 100 years' time it will be considered a museum piece." Offers to Box 672, 25 Down Road, Mew, Guildford, Surrey, GU1 2PY.

Winning team

Bruton Cricket Club, from Somerset, is showing what can be achieved with co-operation between the county, schools, the local authority and themselves.

In the four years of their

EXTRA



COVER

development programme, they have set up three junior teams with regular coaching, guided four boys into Somerset youth teams and helped to fund a bowling machine and an all-weather pitch. Five of their members have become qualified coaches. The men's team has also won two successive promotions.

Changing times

Attitudes appear to be changing for the better. The fact that certain counties would like to pull their players out of England under-19 games to play in the championship is evidence of a general commitment to youth. Contrast this with the case of Matthew Downman: In 1993, he scored a record 267 against West Indies Under-19 — but was not chosen for the next Nottinghamshire game against Durham.

Fast healer

Two years ago Alex Wylie, a promising fast bowler from Worcestershire, was forced, in

retire because of back problems. Sensing improvement last winter, he built up his strength in consultation with a sports specialist at Lilleshall and decided to have another go.

Tom Moody, a former colleague, persuaded Dennis Lillee to take a look at his action while Wylie was in Australia. Now 24, Wylie believes he is clear of problems. He has played for the second team at Worcester and will discover next month whether he has done enough to earn a contract next season.

Managing nicely

Long Eaton Cricket Club's under-15 side went through last season without a win; this time they have reached the national rounds of the Millern Trophy as champions of the Derbyshire section. Dean Cooper, who took on sole responsibility for managing the side at the start of the campaign, has every reason to feel proud — particularly as he is just 17.

Spelling test

If David Beckham was aggrieved at the misspelling of the name on his shirt for the FA Charity Shield on Sunday, then imagine how Shaun Young must feel. The Gloucestershire all-rounder has driven a sponsored car spelling his first name S-E-A-N for the entire summer.

FATHER-TIMES

► REWARDING TIMES ◀

FREE Match of the Day magazine for every reader

This week *The Times* offers you the chance to get a FREE copy of the September issue of the BBC's fantastic football magazine, *Match of the Day*, worth £2.50.

You can get it at any newsagent before September 30, 1997. Simply collect four of the six tokens published in *The Times* this week and attach them to the voucher which will appear on Thursday.

Match of the Day, with 148 colour pages, contains expert viewpoints from Britain's leading pundits, great pictures and good writing.

The bumper September issue includes:

- a free footballing map of Britain plus a ground-by-ground guide with everything travelling fans need to know
- a 25-page preview covering every club in Britain
- features on Kendall, Souless, Huckerby, Fry, Armstrong and Iversen and a host of cracking features such as *A Day in the Life of a Football Witch Doctor*, *Teddy Sheringham's Unofficial Diary*, and Ruud Gullit in conversation with Jimmy Hill



THE TIMES

RUGBY LEAGUE

Best of British face tough task

By CHRISTOPHER IRVINE

Wigan and London Broncos in the Australian competition, they might struggle for a couple of years, as all newcomers do, but they are far from convinced that the international series this autumn will be a foregone conclusion. He singled out the Wigan trio of Andy Farrell, Jason Robinson and Gary Connolly as players of genuine world class and listed Adrian Morley and Marvin Gurney, two youngsters with bright futures.

Despite the wreckage at club level, Great Britain, as past experience has shown, can usually put out a competitive side, one fully capable of taking the single win at Australia's expense, but perhaps not a series victory.

[illegible]

Mahanam is in the unusual position of having scored a double-century to relatively little acclaim. However, his innings is the more crucial for his future. His last Test century came in August 1993.

As the partnership grew yesterday, milestones were

SCOREBOARD

Nilesh Kulकर्णी, the India left-arm spinner, must have thought that he was going to enjoy his introduction to Test cricket, as he took the only wicket to fall with his first delivery, dismissing Marvin Atapattu for 26. Really, however, has now hit hard, and even experienced bowlers such as Ajay Kumble ended the fourth day with figures that he would rather forget.

Jayasuriya survived a close shave from the cricketers and Mahananda was granted a second life. He was awarded

INDIA: Inings 537 for 8 dec. (S R Tendulkar 163, M Ashwin 126, N Srinivas 111, V Kohli 90)	
SF DUNKIE: Test Innings	
S/T Jayasuriya not out	326
M Atapattu	26
R S Mahanada not out	211
C Vidua	24
Sedra: P to T, m b, w 4	24
Total (1 wgt)	587

© "A Parangula, D. Jayasuriya, IR S Kumble, C Vidua, R S Mahanada, W P Uthappa, C Venka R Pashupati Kumar, M Mahananda".

FALL OF WICKETS: 1-33.
BOWLING: Passed 21-7-50; Kurande 15-2-47-C; Chauden 32-15-50; Kurnde 50-16-3; Vikram 46-11-31; George 50-34-4; Tendulkar 1-0-2-0; David 1-0-2-0.
Umpire: K P Francis (San Lanka)

Whether or not Jayasuriya passes Lara's total today, many more records are there to be broken, with even the highest innings of a team in Test cricket (903) now appearing on the horizon. Certainly, Jayasuriya is not overburdened by the weight of expectation. "I always sleep well. Tonight is no exception," he said before departing the ground yesterday evening.

INDIA: First innings 537 for 8 dec (S R Tendulkar 143, M Azharuddin 126, N S Gadgil 101, D S Chandra 80).

SRI LANKA: First Innings	
ST Jayasinghe not out	326
ST Jayasinghe c Munga b Kulasekara	55
R Seneviratne not out	24
Extras (lb w) 7, nb 6, w 4	24
Total (7 wickets)	587
P A de Silva, "A Runalunga", D R M Jayawardena, I R S Kulasekara, W P U Jayasinghe, R P Pushpakumara, M Muralitharan and K J Silva to bat	
FALL OF WICKET: 1-39.	
BOWLING: Prasad 21-1-73-0; Kumara 11-2-47-0; Chenuan 32-7-159-0; Kumbe 10-2-63-0; Kulasekara 46-8-113-1; Ganguly 50-34-0; Tendulkar 1-0-0-0; David 1-0-0-0.	
Umpires K T Francis (Sri Lanka)	

[illegible]

P. Hodgson (062)	28	0
C. L. Holloway (063)	28	0
J. House (064)	0	0

- 1 **Yes** (Tynes [player's name])
- 2 **My J's (N Squared)**
- 3 **Kelly's Cakes 4 (N Kaib)**
- 4 **Wardlaw House 3 (P/O'Brien)**
- 5 **The Twins (S Collinson)**
- 6 **Chester Hill 2 (N Johns)**
- 7 **St. Lawrence 3 (Schroter)**
- 8 **Polius (M Clarke)**
- 9 **Barnard Boys (M Woodley)**
- 10 **Friday Night X (N McCarran)**
- 11 **Dennis Downs (D Taitoo)**
- 12 **St. Lawrence 2 (M Woodley)**
- 13 **Acad All Rounders (A Milroy)**
- 14 **Off Spinners in A (Milly)**
- 15 **More And Go Hap (N Johns)**
- 16 **Roz's Barmy Army (R Anderson)**
- 17 **All Star All Stars (M Milroy)**
- 18 **North Ayr 2 (M Clarke)**
- 19 **The Runners (D Taitoo)**
- 20 **Hurss Kick Hender (R Jackson)**
- 21 **Verfue Vintage No**
- 22 **Dave's Dependables (D Taitoo)**
- 23 **St. Lawrence 1 (M Milroy)**
- 24 **Rothen's Hero's (M Peetman)**
- 25 **Tobias (A Luckhurst)**
- 26 **Colonnade Balls (D Blackwood)**

Pos	Pos	Team (Player's name)	Pos	Pos	Team (Player's name)	Pos	Pos
1999	26	Savarnes (R Krowne)	1989	51	The Sack Team (J Swain)	1844	75
19819	27	La Lobz (R Johnson)	19849	52	J S W C (J Swines)	1844	75
19235	28	Paulines Stars (M P Howell)	19849	53	Points Golos (D Ferries)	1844	75
19235	29	Paulines Stars (M P Howell)	19849	54	Points Golos (D Ferries)	1844	75
19126	30	Drak Relatoc (G Lamber)	19849	55	Points Golos (D Ferries)	1844	75
19064	31	Wetk Pargo (BE Howes)	19849	56	Kerr's First (N Harsh)	1844	75
19056	32	The Braughing Club (P Moore)	19849	57	Shen's Eleven (M Shani)	1844	75
19056	33	Teddy (R Searl)	19849	58	Winch's Wamors (G Wier)	1844	75
19029	34	Old Wringlons (T Hillman)	19849	59	Rugby (R Searl)	1844	75
19001	35	Wellborn Post (EG Evans)	19849	60	Bartholomew (A Bartholomew)	1844	75
19994	36	Sams The Man (S G Sampson)	19849	61	Huntelic (A Frozer)	1844	75
19994	37	Sams The Man (S G Sampson)	19849	62	Tony's Stars (J Swain)	1844	75
19994	38	Sams The Man (S G Sampson)	19849	63	The Floodmen (M Of Blackburn)	1844	75
19994	39	Sams The Man (S G Sampson)	19849	64	Sams The Man (S G Sampson)	1844	75
19994	40	Sams The Man (S G Sampson)	19849	65	M's X (M McCusker)	1844	75
19994	41	Sams The Man (S G Sampson)	19849	66	M's X (M McCusker)	1844	75
19994	42	Sams The Man (S G Sampson)	19849	67	M's X (M McCusker)	1844	75
19994	43	Sams The Man (S G Sampson)	19849	68	M's X (M McCusker)	1844	75
19994	44	Sams The Man (S G Sampson)	19849	69	M's X (M McCusker)	1844	75
19994	45	Sams The Man (S G Sampson)	19849	70	M's X (M McCusker)	1844	75
19994	46	Sams The Man (S G Sampson)	19849	71	M's X (M McCusker)	1844	75
19994	47	Sams The Man (S G Sampson)	19849	72	M's X (M McCusker)	1844	75
19994	48	Sams The Man (S G Sampson)	19849	73	M's X (M McCusker)	1844	75
19994	49	Sams The Man (S G Sampson)	19849	74	M's X (M McCusker)	1844	75
19994	50	Sams The Man (S G Sampson)	19849	75	M's X (M McCusker)	1844	75

[illegible]

	total	total	
-20	20	3068	K.J. Shane (267)
-5	181	1046	R.D. Stephenson (2)
0	0	746	C.W. Stevens (2)
0	0	746	CE Stump (20)
0	26	1279	S.C. Sum (271)
0	0	1279	S. Suresh (2)
0	0	1279	P.C.R. Tumul (37)
20	487	1945	UD Lital (24)
0	0	1945	K.K. Werns (27)
			Wegner Younts (27)
			S.L. Warren (277)
0	0	751	W. Werns (27)
0	72	12	J. Wood (27)
			Category B
			A. Alzani (23)
			P. Alzani (23)
			P.A. Bani (23)
			G.J. Bani (23)
			M.A.V. Ben (23)
			L. Bani (23)
			N.A. Bani (23)
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[illegible]

22	4	1	0	-20	102	2220
22	0	0	0	0	102	2220
21	7	3	0	0	231	5974
21	1	0	0	0	231	5974
20	0	0	0	0	35	1039
20	0	0	0	0	35	1039
107	8	0	0	5	292	1321
83	0	0	0	-10	193	1481
83	10	0	0	0	272	1118
70	2	0	0	0	123	1920
70	2	0	0	0	123	1920
63	0	0	0	-20	115	1123
4	4	2	0	0	80	1951
4	4	2	0	0	80	1951
102	3	0	0	0	167	1500
0	0	0	0	0	0	984
0	0	0	0	0	0	984
0	0	0	0	0	90	1184
33	0	0	1	0	53	1267
239	0	1	10	90	900	2223
239	0	1	10	90	900	2223
63	0	3	0	0	106	402
22	2	1	0	0	62	1339
0	0	0	0	0	0	56
5	0	0	0	0	5	1174
5	0	0	0	0	5	1174
61	0	2	5	0	108	771

[illegible]

0	6	888	M P Sweeney (332)
0	131	1010	M P Sweeney (332)
0	0	0	J D Shandross (332)
0	0	1430	N S Sharnoff (332)
0	138	938	C J Shattuck (332)
0	0	0	E J Shapiro (336)
0	0	1222	S D Thomas (336)
0	11	199	G B Thomas (336)
0	0	1999	M D Thordahl (338)
0	0	151	A R Tabor (338)
0	22	75	A J Tabor (338)
0	0	151	M Vandera (341)
0	20	1361	A P van Tol (341)
-50	130	1268	C J Vanden (341)
0	0	1376	G Wether (344)
0	0	1317	G Wether (344)
0	0	337	A C Wither (347)
0	120	1161	N W Wither (347)
-20	78	965	G Yates (347)
0	53	964	□ One point is
0	0	1002	each wicket an
0	63	743	stumping.
0	0	54	Five bonus po
0	0	1002	ten bonus po
0	0	1002	wickets in an
0	47	791	awarded for ten
0	94	1962	Twenty
0	0	1004	All points scor
0	0	828	□ Source: EC2/9

Player's name	Pts
Henry (M Macree)	12310
Jo Yorkins (M Hepworth)	12306
Jo Dymond (Miss D Shepherd)	12302
John C (A Luchinski)	12199
Colin J (M Corbett)	12197
Colin A (M McLellan)	12163
Jo Satchers (S Moore)	12158
Jo Team Howies	12152
Jo Boys One (M Jones)	12148
David A (M Gardner)	12146
John C (V M)	12124
Edward Rose (A Luchinski)	12123
Goal Leader 1 (D Findlay)	12110
Jo Batfins (M Turbutt)	12106
Michael Bowler (D Findlay)	12102
John C (M O'Meara)	12081
F (M Squires)	12071
Eyes In Marchant	12067
David Bunlins (Miss DC Bates)	12063
Jo J (D Whyte)	12052
Jo Underwood	12049
Jo's Dream X 1 (Ms Aitchison)	12043
Jo B F I T C (Mr McKenzie)	12005
Jo Angels (A Wood)	12040
Murdered Jay (M Billington)	12035

Runs Hits C/2 Error Weekly Overall

				pts	total	total
0	0	0	0	0	0	1107
0	5	0	0	0	126	979
8	6	0	0	0	25	136
0	0	0	0	0	0	134
-14	7	2	0	0	134	1197
0	0	0	0	0	25	136
0	0	1	1	-20	100	1262
0	0	0	0	0	10	135
0	0	0	0	0	0	809
0	0	0	0	0	0	1350
-1	1	0	0	0	17	1715
0	0	0	0	11	13	134
-34	5	0	0	0	81	33
1	4	0	0	0	11	68
0	0	0	0	0	0	355
-21	4	2	0	0	0	0
-13	1	0	0	0	33	710
8	1	0	0	0	28	636
0	0	0	0	0	40	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	80
0	79	1	4	5	184	825
-19	0	0	0	0	18	1252
0	0	0	0	0	0	7
0	0	0	0	0	0	320
75	3	3	0	-20	0	80
0	3	3	0	0	55	1363
0	0	0	0	0	63	656
0	0	0	0	0	0	1715
0	6	2	1	0	68	766
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	40	510
0	2	1	0	-20	40	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	188
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
-97	3	0	0	0	97	1113
0	0	0	0	0	80	94
0	1	0	0	0	1	251
-1	0	0	0	0	17	134
18	1	1	1	-20	65	297
-45	0	0	0	0	0	1054
0	0	0	0	0	0	134
0	0	0	0	0	0	135
0	6	0	0	0	43	163
0	0	0	0	0	0	827
0	0	0	0	0	0	226
15	0	0	0	0	26	1008
0	0	0	0	0	0	137
0	0	0	0	0	0	393
0	0	0	0	0	0	692
0	0	0	0	0	0	163
-7	3	0	0	0	67	699
0	0	0	0	0	21	101
0	0	0	0	0	0	824
0	0	0	0	0	0	58
0	0	0	0	0	0	223
0	0	0	0	0	0	28
0	0	0	0	0	0	282

0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	6533
0	0	0	0	0	84
0	3	1	0	80	83
0	0	0	0	0	52
16	7	0	0	15	1178
0	0	0	0	0	154
0	0	0	0	0	101
0	0	0	0	0	396
71	2	1	0	131	349
12	1	0	0	5	157
0	0	0	0	40	870
23	6	0	0	143	1566
0	0	0	0	0	51
0	0	0	0	0	912

awarded for each run, 20 points for
 catch and 40 points for each
 points are awarded for a half-century,
 are awarded for a century and for five
 innings, and 20 bonus points are
 added in a match.
 100 runs are required for a duck.
 and in Test matches are doubled.

Cricketer Record

£4 million pocketed in sponsorship

THE revitalised board of the World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association (WPBSA), which has placed paramount importance on the search for sponsors, began delivering the goods yesterday when it was announced that Liverpool Victoria has expanded its financial involvement within the game.

The country's largest friendly society is to sponsor the United Kingdom championship for the next four years in a prize-money and organisational package worth £4 million to the WPBSA, the game's governing body.

Last year the UK championship was one of a number of unsponsored tournaments on the professional circuit, even though it enjoyed extensive television coverage on the BBC. This year the event, at Preston Guild Hall in November, offers a total prize-fund of £440,000, with £75,000 going to the winner.

"This agreement shows that our sport has plenty to offer as a sponsorship vehicle for major companies," Rex Williams, the WPBSA chairman, said.

Answers from page 37

(b) An obelisk or columnar monument, specifically used for the ancient Buddhist columns of Eastern India. From the Hindi *lat* or *lath* a staff or pole. The oldest authentic examples of these lats that we are acquainted with are those which King Asoka set up."

and a quadroon. From the Old French *mestif* a mongrel.

(b) A learned or literary lady. From the Latin. Coleridge, a letter of 1794: "The young lady is said to be the most literary of the beautiful, and the most beautiful of the literatae."

CHESS MOVE
1 Rxf7! Kxf7 2 Rh1+ Kg8 (2... Ke7 3

f6+! Kg8 - taking the pawn loses the queen to 4 Nd5+ - 4 Rxd8+ Kxh8 5 Qh2+ and 6 Qh6 mating! 3 Rxd8+! Kxh8 4 Bxe5+ dxe5 5 Qh6+ Kg8 6 f6 and mate follows.



AVA EQUITY & LAW

WALSH

Briton puts fitness doubts behind him in defence of crown

Edwards leaps into unknown

FROM ROB HUGHES
IN ATHENS

BY THE time Britain awakes this morning, we should know whether Jonathan Edwards is in fit shape to defend his world triple jump crown — indeed whether he, and only he, can repeat the exercise of capturing gold in an athletic discipline for the United Kingdom on a global stage.

Yesterday, looking every inch the articulated clerk in his spectacles and his beachwear, this remarkable competitor admitted that he felt the weight of expectation. "It is important. At the Atlanta Olympics, we lacked gold, so I know that today, and hopefully the final on Friday, are important to myself, my family, but also for British athletics," he said.

"I haven't jumped five weeks, so I cannot say the heel injury is completely gone. I'm aware of it, though not in constant pain, because an injury lingers in the mind. In that respect, this morning will be a bit of a step in the dark, but I'm not worried. I'm ready otherwise I wouldn't be here."

Put yourself in the picture. It is 6.15am British Summer Time, 8.15 in Athens. The Olympic stadium echoes to emptiness, its vast expanse of 52,000 white seats glistening in the early morning sun. In this soulless atmosphere, Charles Austin, the American world record-holder, had failed to qualify in the high jump earlier in the week.

And, although Edwards arrived in the Greek capital only on Monday night, he came very much aware and prepared for the breathtaking indifference of the Greeks, the founders of athletics, to attend their sport.

If that suggests some spectator resistance to the decision of the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) to bring the world championships around on a two-year instead of a four-year cycle, then Edwards, our one defending champion, defends his sport. "I personally think it's not a bad idea," he reasons.

Golf has four majors in a year, tennis has two. So, in those sports, the competitors accept a lot of pressure. OK, when you push yourself to the limit, there is always a chance of injury, but as a professional, I see nothing



On the eve of qualification for the world championship triple jump final, Edwards admits that he is nervous

wrong in being asked at least once a season to accept that ultimate pressure of competition."

That said, this 31-year-old vicar's son looked taut and a little anxious yesterday. It could, of course, be pre-competition nerves, for he admits that there is always anxiety before coming out to qualify.

"It is a nerve-wracking experience at any time," Edwards said. "And, in my case, it would be history if I failed to qualify. I may take one jump to reach the mark. I'm prepared to make it three, but I jumped a little bit off a short approach in training last week and had no problems at all."

He says, with his one rehearsed attempt at bravado, that the fire inside him is ready to be rekindled, that anybody who wants to beat him is in for the hardest of fights. He watched the women's triple jump — in which what crowd there was became captivated as Sarka Kasparikova, from the Czech Repub-

lic, surprised and defeated the delightful Romanian, Rodica Mateescu. "The wind seems to blow around in the face," Edwards observed, "but the track appears very, very fast. As the women have shown, it is possible to jump good distances."

Possible to beat his American adversary, Kenny Harrison? "He and I are a reasonable bit ahead of the rest of the world," Edwards said. "I have the world title, he

has the Olympic title, and I would say, to win here, I have to jump one centimetre further than Kenny Harrison."

As we listen, one is aware that Edwards is still, essentially, a private man, who formerly worked as a PE teacher and who has worn the glitter of gold and accrued the fortune that goes with it while still retaining an aura of ordinariness. That, indeed, is his triumph, the quality of mind and approach to life that questions whether what he does — hop, step and jump into a pit of sand — is really all that worthwhile, compared as he once asked, with doctors in Rwanda.

You cannot shake his conviction that he has this one phenomenal gift, and why would you try when it has propelled him further than any other man has gone — 18.29 metres from the take-off to the heels in the sand.

The only illegal thing he may have done in his life is to jump even further than that

with wind assistance. Yet he is aware of the dubious practices of others.

He may face the Jamaican, James Beckford, who was given an amnesty from a three-month ban for taking a stimulant as a consequence of the IAAF's acquiescence to drug abusers. "I was quite surprised," Edwards admitted. "It's difficult, because, as we have seen in England, there can be cases of a faulty test."

"But the reduction in bans for drug taking does send out the wrong message. Really, the IAAF is caught between a rock and a hard place; in principle, I disagree with what it has done, but I can see the other side, the litigation that is making it so difficult."

A clean athlete, clear in his mind that he has overcome the injuries, protected today by heel cups that are slightly more cushioned, he leaps for the country, for himself, for the integrity of a sport. May the gods be with him.

TIMETABLE

All times BST

TODAY, AUGUST 6: Qualification 11.00m hurdles (08.15); Men's triple jump, qualifying round (09.00); 67.00m Decathlon (09.00); Women's 800m, first round (09.15); Men's 200m, first round (09.50); Decathlon (09.50); Women's 100m, first round (10.00); Decathlon (10.00); Women's 400m, first round (10.15); Men's 100m, first round (10.30); Women's 200m, second round (10.45); Men's 200m, second round (10.50); Women's 400m, second round (11.00); Men's 400m, second round (11.15); Women's 800m, second round (11.30); Men's 800m, second round (11.45); Women's 100m, final (11.55); Men's 100m, final (12.00); Women's 200m, final (12.15); Men's 200m, final (12.30); Women's 400m, final (12.45); Men's 400m, final (12.55); Women's 800m, final (13.10); Men's 800m, final (13.25); Women's 100m, final (13.40); Men's 100m, final (13.55); Women's 200m, final (14.10); Men's 200m, final (14.25); Women's 400m, final (14.40); Men's 400m, final (14.55); Women's 800m, final (15.10); Men's 800m, final (15.25); Women's 100m, final (15.40); 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1. *Introduction*

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has discovered Ricky's speed and ambitions and appointed her his manager. Barry is clearly cruising for the most delicate emotional bit: Visiting at the home of the scrawny Vanessa, a neighbor intended and the Mitchell brothers are again primed for a spring summer infidelity: Grant waxes flirtatious; Annie (Nadia Sawalha) and Phil with the brazen L. (Janet Dibley).

Sawalha's arrival in Wales has heralded a new season footedness in *EastEnders* cases, which Dibley and Adele Saxe and Vanessa have done nothing to dispel. They're all grown women, which makes a refreshing change from troubled teenage, but more importantly they all have a commanding screen presence that injects a new energy into their scenes but those that don't mind. My mind, it was probably take all three of the cheer up Ted Hills.

**Matthew
Bond**



with the occasional wrecked steam train, we saw many times. In between, it was back to the gloomy men in gloomy rooms. I think you've got the picture.

Over on BBC1, there was a similar predictability to *Wildlife on One*. As is widely known, BBC wildlife documentaries also now come in only two varieties, the expensive ones that David Attenborough actually appears in and

To be fair, history was against Roberts. When the ill-conceived project was finally cancelled (just 20 days after Stalin's death) the prisoners' last task was to remove the rails they had already laid, a job which deprived Roberts of atmospheric shots of frost-buckled track stretching across the tundra. As a result, the few bits he did find, together

up to a certain degree, possibly even shame about adopting such a knocking spin. This, after all, was the story of the Great Stalin Railway, the *zoo-building* of which cost the lives of an estimated 60,000-100,000 slave labourers. The point is that while the railway itself will have been news to many of us, life in Siberian prison camps is not. There is a well-read canon of powerful Gollas literature out

CHANNEL 5 ON SATELLITE
Channel 5 is now broadcasting transponder No 63 on the Astra Sat. Viewers with a Videocrypt decoder will be able to receive the channel for charge. Frequencies for transponder 63 are picture: 10.92075 GHz; sound: 7.02 and 7.20 MHz.

6.00am 5 News Early (7906148)
7.30 Havalakazoo (6524343)
8.00 The Enid Blyton Adventure (1/3) (t) (2057709)
8.30 WorldWide A series about the styles of architecture (7110) (2049)
9.00 Espresso (6672148)
10.00 Exclusive (t) (9191525)
10.30 Flights of Fancy: Wings Over Dr Colin Pennycook explores the bird flight (t) (2068544)
11.00 Loose Chat show (2296525)
Double Espresso (33816254) 12 Bold and the Beautiful (t) (2 12-30pm Family Affairs (t) (6 1.00 5 News Update (22706815) 1.05 Beach (t) (1907051) 2.00 5's Co Live entertainment show (332150)
3.30 The Girl on the Boat (1982) comedy, adapted from a P.G. Wodehouse, with Norman U. Millicent Martin and Richard. Directed by Henry Knapik (9359)
5.20 5's Company - Late Extra (60)
5.30 100 Per Cent (538615)
6.00 Move on Up (5383728)
6.30 Family Affairs Jack's world begin apart. Susie tells Melanie that she's slept to her brother (t) (5387780)
7.00 Exclusive Julia Bradbury and Edwards-Jones with more gossip. Includes a report on what some Hollywood stars to Sci (8553475)

THE EVIL-SMELLING SHIELD BOY
The evil-smelling shield boy (7)

7.30 Small Miracles: The Small of Success This is an eight-part series on insects (536364)
8.00 Instant Gardens William Van transforms a Newcastle concrete into an ornamental-style garden (225)
8.30 5 News with Kestly Young (t) (70)
9.00 Cooi Australian police drama starring Gary Sweet (19438267)
10.50 Not the Jack Docherty Show and chat (1937964)
11.30 Prisoner: Cell Block H (220837)
12.25am Live and Dangerous include coverage of a US major league baseball game (22605057)
4.35 The Streets of San Francisco (Karl Malden (t) (9190190)
5.30 100 Per Cent (t) (9580113)

CHALLENGE TV	
30.0 Family Tree Wings (6:57)	5.0/5.0m Cross Wits (20:57-21:57) Fortunes (18:15-18:45) Worrier Takes All (14:12-14:38) Worrier Takes All (14:38-14:59) Worrier Takes All (14:59-15:10) Worrier Takes All (15:10-15:21) Worrier Takes All (15:21-15:32) Worrier Takes All (15:32-15:43) Worrier Takes All (15:43-15:54) Worrier Takes All (15:54-16:05) Worrier Takes All (16:05-16:16) Worrier Takes All (16:16-16:27) Worrier Takes All (16:27-16:38) Worrier Takes All (16:38-16:49) Worrier Takes All (16:49-17:00) Worrier Takes All (17:00-17:11) Worrier Takes All (17:11-17:22) Worrier Takes All (17:22-17:33) Worrier Takes All (17:33-17:44) Worrier Takes All (17:44-17:55) Worrier Takes All (17:55-18:06) Worrier Takes All (18:06-18:17) Worrier Takes All (18:17-18:28) Worrier Takes All (18:28-18:39) Worrier Takes All (18:39-18:50) Worrier Takes All (18:50-19:01) Worrier Takes All (19:01-19:12) Worrier Takes All (19:12-19:23) Worrier Takes All (19:23-19:34) Worrier Takes All (19:34-19:45) Worrier Takes All 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RUGBY UNION 37

Hallett steps down in name of unity

SPORT

WEDNESDAY AUGUST 6 1997

SAILING 38

Stormy weather continues to disrupt Cowes

Outsider from South Africa thwarts latest British attempt to end silver streak

Backley fails to convert golden goal

FROM DAVID POWELL, ATHLETICS CORRESPONDENT, IN ATHENS

THE invisible man, as Steve Backley labelled himself this season, was beaten by the unknown athlete in the javelin at the world championships here yesterday. It is doubtful whether these championships will provide a greater upset than the one manufactured by Marius Corbett, from South Africa, which denied Backley the gold medal.

Backley, who had finished as runner-up at the 1995 world championships and the 1996 Olympic Games, had to settle for second place once again. His consistency is one imagination, matched only by his frustration.

If there was a consolation, it was that he went into the sixth and final round outside the medals but produced his best effort under pressure. Mick Hill, his fellow Briton, thus had the bronze medal snatched away by his close friend. Hill finished fourth.

The British silver streak was therefore continued. Since Jonathan Edwards won his triple jump gold medal at the 1995 world championships in Gothenburg, British athletes have won 17 silver medals in global championships, without striking gold. They gathered three in Gothenburg, after Edwards had performed, four at the Olympic Games in Atlanta, four at the world junior championships, three at the world indoor championships and one in the world cross-country championships last March, through Paula Radcliffe. Backley's silver, after Denise Lewis's in the heptathlon, 24 hours earlier, merely perpetuated the sequence.

Backley's disappointment might have been bearable had his conqueror been Jan Zelezny, the Czech who has swept all before him during

the past three years, indeed since Backley beat him to the European title in 1994. But to lose to an opponent he knew little about, and who carried no pedigree at the highest level, will heighten his frustration.

Corbett, 21, came into the competition with a personal best of 83.90 metres and his first-round throw suggested that he was not likely to improve it. He managed only 76.58 metres.

The world junior champion in 1994, Corbett had made no mark at all on the senior international scene but his coach's masterstroke was to instruct him to take part in a competition in Stellenbosch in the early part of the season to study Zelezny at work first-hand.

In the first round, Hill, the

Leap into the unknown ... 42
Results 38

fifth to throw, took an early lead with 84.48 metres but Sergey Makarov, from Russia, and Boris Henry, from Germany, recorded longer distances as they followed him. Backley managed 82.94 metres and Zelezny, the last to throw, was greeted by laughter from the crowd when his first throw fell so short that he stepped out of the arc to register a foul.

The competition came alive in the second round when Corbett threw an African record of 88.40 metres, 4.50 metres farther than his previous lifetime best and ten metres beyond his best coming into the season. It proved to be the winning mark. Next to throw was Hill who, undaunted, moved up to second place with 86.54 metres and

Backley added two metres to his first-round effort to go third with 84.74.

By the end of the round, however, Kostas Gatsioudis, Greece's only genuine hope of a gold medal on home soil, had added five metres to his first effort with 86.64, which put him in second place.

Zelezny, with his second-round throw, failed to find the landing sector and, with only the top eight athletes after three rounds progressing for a further three throws, the Czech needed to find a good effort. However, his 82.04 metres fell 76 centimetres short of the last qualifier, Aki Parvianen, and he was out.

The athletes threw in reverse order, now that they were whittled down to eight, but only Backley managed to improve on his distance from the first half of the competition.

Andy Hart's elimination from the 800 metres yesterday, in the second round, strengthened the argument over whether too many of the Great Britain squad had arrived ill-prepared. Injuries, and a failure to cope with the heat, have resulted in an unusually high failure rate in the qualifying rounds.

British officials, justifiably, judge team success at international championships not only in medals but in personal bests. In other words, if developing athletes respond to the challenge, and confirm their potential, that is a measurable reward. There have, however, been precious few personal bests here.

It must, therefore, have brought welcome relief to the management when Colin Jackson, Tony Jarrett, and Sally Gunnell, Britain's three outstanding achievers over hurdles during the first half of the decade, found their best form of the season yesterday. In the first round of the 110 metres hurdles, staged early in the morning, Jackson recorded 13.19 seconds, his fastest of the season, to win the sixth heat. Jarrett, too, won his heat, in 13.27sec, to join his fellow Briton in the semi-finals today. Allen Johnson, from the United States, the world and Olympic champion, is also among the last 16. Johnson predicted that the final would be "a great one". Gunnell also ran a season's best time to enter the semi-finals of the 400 metres hurdles.



Backley puts everything into his effort to grab the gold medal in Athens yesterday, before finally having to settle for the silver once again

British hopes trail in Johnson's wake

FROM DAVID POWELL

STILL we wait for Great Britain's first global men's 400 metres champion since Eric Liddell won the Olympic title in 1924. Michael Johnson, from the United States, came out of the other side of his personal crisis here yesterday when he put a worrying season behind him by winning his third successive gold medal over one lap at the biennial world championships.

The race was a huge disappointment for Britain, not so much because Johnson won, but because, on the first occasion that Britain had seen three men progress into the final, only one managed a personal-best time. The athletes had predicted a British record at least.

In the event, however, only Mark Richardson, who

finished fourth, had reason for any satisfaction. His time, 44.47sec, was a personal best and elevated him from fifth place to joint-third on the national all-time list.

Johnson was a clear-cut winner in, for him, a moderate time of 44.12sec. Davis Kamoga, from Uganda, took the silver medal in 44.37sec and Tyrone Washington, from the United States, the bronze in 44.39sec.

Iwan Thomas, on whose shoulders the heaviest British hopes depended, paid a high price for his outrageously fast start. Thomas, who likes to get away briskly, even false-started and, when the athletes were clean away second time, it was the British record-holder who made the fast early running. By 200 metres, he was level with Johnson, who was on his outside, and as they ran around the top

bend, the American was unable to make up the gap.

Into the straight, Thomas led but, suddenly, he seemed to start treading water. Johnson came past 80 metres from home and four others followed as Thomas finished sixth in 44.52sec. Jamie Baulch was last in 45.22.

Johnson is unbeaten in world championship finals stretching back to 1991. This had been a turbulent ride, beginning in June when, racing Donovan Bailey over 150 metres in a challenge race in Toronto, he pulled up with a quadriceps injury.

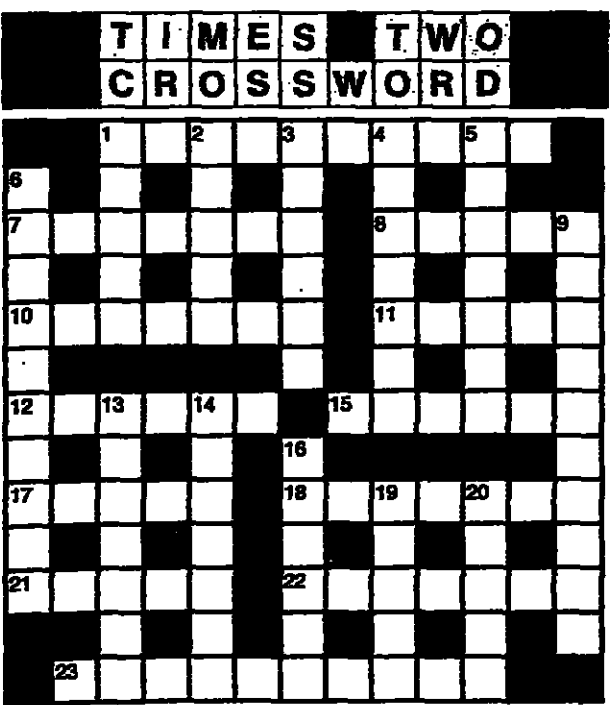
When he attempted to make his comeback in Paris last month, he lost his eight-year unbeaten streak, covering 58 finals, at 400 metres. He missed the United States trials for the world championships and would not have appeared here but for the

International Amateur Athletic Federation changing its rules to accommodate him. Belatedly, they offered him a so-called wild card.

Johnson had to wait 20 minutes after his second-round race before discovering that his time of 45.39sec had earned him one of the four fastest losers' places. He had slowed down short of the line and was beaten to the third and final automatic place.

Johnson's wild card had provoked controversy. Among those who spoke out against his inclusion was Merlene Ottey, the sprinter stateswoman of sprinting. "I do not like the way it was done," Ottey said. "I believe that, if Michael Johnson had not been injured, there would have been no wild cards."

Washington, his own team colleague, did not like it either. "It is completely unfair," Washington said. "It is nothing but politics and there are plenty of athletes here just as unhappy."



No 1165

ACROSS
1 Complete expert (4,6)
7 Sweet drink taken with egg coffee (7)
8 Coordinate accurately (5)
10 Take in air (7)
11 Have fantasy (5)
12 Observe; display of info (6)
15 NW town, has Wanderers (6)
17 Wood texture: wheat etc (5)
18 Unbeliever (7)
21 Acceptor (leg of bet) (5)
22 Prevarication (7)
23 Teenager (10)

DOWN
1 Resentment: pride (oneself) (5)
2 A bon-bon (5)
3 Tasty mouthful (6)
4 What's name: rascal (2-3-2)
5 Obvious (7)
6 Unreliable person (3-2-5)
9 Ground between armies (2,4)
13 Followed movements (6)
14 Govern, manage (7)
16 Forearm-flexing muscle (6)
19 Thin chipped-off piece (5)
20 Rationalist believer (5)

SOLUTION TO NO 1164

ACROSS: 1 Ecstasy 5 Fete 8 Sitter 9 At once 10 In-sinist 12 Mull 13 Husbandry 17 Path 18 Sapphire 20 Stogie 21 Tomato 23 Wren 24 Hydrant

DOWN: 2 Client 3 Tot 4 Siren 5 Frogmarch 6 Tickle 7 Wajlon 11 Touch down 14 Bushel 15 Patter 16 Proton 19 Potty 22 Mar

SOLUTION TO TIMES TWO CROSSWORD 1160
In association with BRITISH MIDLAND
ACROSS: 1 Imprimator 8 Samovar 9 Nitre 10 Rose 11 Pardoner 13 Custom 15 Wake up 17 Upheaval 18 Deal 21 Allot 22 Unwells 23 Recuperate

DOWN: 2 Mumps 3 Rave 4 Mortal 5 Tone-deaf 6 Retinue 7 Metropolis 8 Structural 12 Monastic 14 Scholar 16 Grouper 19 Exile 20 Over
1st PRIZE of a return ticket travelling economy class to anywhere on BRITISH MIDLAND's domestic or international network is a James Harrold, Bedfordshire.
2nd PRIZE of a return ticket to anywhere on BRITISH MIDLAND's domestic network is Mrs Montgomery, Buxton, East Sussex.
All flights subject to availability.

Counties offer cautious welcome

Simon Wilde finds a mixed response to the formula for a brighter cricketing future

In the Banqueting Suite at Lord's, yesterday, the members of the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) were presented with Lord MacLaurin of Knebworth's vision of the future of the game, the result of nine months' intensive research and deliberation. The leaks of the plans had proved largely accurate.

The response to the presentation was largely favourable, especially from the richer counties. There was approval for the proposals for one-day cricket, which include replacing the Sunday league and Benson and Hedges Cup in 1999 with a two-division 50-overs national league competition with promotion and relegation, and an expanded NatWest Trophy.

The endorsement of the three-conference county championship, with end-of-season play-offs next season, was more guarded and the plans to phase out the second XI competition and raise the profile of club cricket proved more contentious.

Members have six weeks in which to consider their responses and suggest amendments before voting — for a straight majority — on September 15. Early indications

from the various levels of the game, however, were mixed.

Bob Bennett, the chairman of Lancashire, was delighted. "This is a step forward for the game," he said. "I am looking forward to its implementation." But Peter Anderson, the chief executive of Somerset, said he was "a bit shell-shocked".

Anderson continued: "There were some pretty good ideas, there is a reduction in championship cricket, which is a worry; and an increase in one-day cricket, which appeals. There may be fewer 'earnings days', but the way they have arranged things, earnings-power may be increased."

Tony Pigott, the chief executive of Sussex, will be showing the report to the members. "Outside first-class cricket, the plans are excellent, but the reduction in four-day cricket is definitely a grey area," Pigott said. "We want to produce better Test players and cutting down on four-day matches is not the way to educate them."

David Lloyd, the England coach, disagreed. "I am pleased. It should produce

more competitive cricket, better rest periods and better net periods, which should all make for better cricketers."

The players will be asked their opinions between now and September. David Graveney, general secretary of the Professional Cricketers' Association (PCA) and chairman of the England selectors, said that his choice for the county champions would have been two divisions with promotion and relegation.

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Records tumble 41

"But a system with play-offs is a good alternative," he said.

Matthew Fleming, the PCA chairman, thought that the majority of players would be pleased. "From what I have seen, it would mean an average of three championship matches a month, giving players a week off, and time for training and to recover from injuries," Fleming said.

Plans to scrap the second XI competition were described as

"flawed" by Nick Cook, the second XI coach of Northamptonshire. "Professional cricketers do not come out of the leagues, even in Lancashire and Yorkshire; they come from the age groups," he said. "Club pitches are not good enough and, if the surfaces are not right, you are doomed."

Dav Whatmore, the Australian-bred coach of Lancashire, suggested that England was trying to mirror the Australian system. "Before a cricketer is selected for his state in Australia, he has to do well for his club," he said. "Reducing county staff might be a good thing, because there are so many players it is easy for someone to get lost."

Micky Stewart, the ECB's director of coaching and excellence, agreed. "The best players will want to play for the best club sides in the country. If it comes right, we will see a big acceleration in standards," he said.

Derek Bridge, chairman of the Minor Counties Cricket Association, said: "We may need to modify and co-operate and turn our ways towards the future of English cricket. It is not so disastrous as it looked two or three years ago, when it appeared some people thought we were a waste of time."

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MCCARTNEY

by Noreen Egan
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Local offices

Furore
Field's
for w

By Andrew P. H. N.
POLITICAL
CORRESPONDENT
AND VALERIE F. H.

THE Government caused yesterday's first step towards variations in benefits after a series of floated plans benefit office own budgets.
Frank Field, the unity Minister brought into the with a specific welfare bill, deriding power the Social Security Dept. the 500 local from the benefits paid to schools.
Mr Field, unionists' most radical said that local office given autonomy budgets. "If it doesn't see how we able to deliver reforms that we live. It's clearly the agenda. What is the next step? Radio 4's The W.
His remarks a visit to a house